La Cage aux Folles

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La Cage aux Folles

by Dovesummer

Summary

Written for Reel Hannibal 2021.

The Birdcage, Hannigram style.

Although this fic follows the basic plot and stays true to the spirit of the movie/play, I have changed certain elements and back story.

Smut occurs in chapter 3. The homophobia/homophobic language I tagged for occurs in Chapter 4.

Chapter 1

Abigail paused on the corner opposite the building that had been her home for so many years. Was still her home, she supposed, though she had been away at school and hadn't made it back as often she should have. She stood still for several minutes, eyes drawn as always to the name of the club, emblazoned across the facade of the building in gaudy lights.

If asked, she would have blamed her stillness on traffic, but it was a pale excuse: traffic was virtually non-existent so early in the day.

In truth she wasn't sure if she should move forward or turn and leave.

The club and the apartment above - the promise of home, love and contentment it contained - pulled at her as it always did. But she also felt the disconnect of being a stranger in a land where she had once belonged. Time was a stream, constantly reshaping things around it. During her absence it had moved to fill the space she'd occupied. She could press her way back in, but her childhood footprints had already been absorbed and she would never fit in the same way again.

There was also the tiny, niggling voice at the back of her head that she should not be here for the reason she was, that she should turn back before ever making her request.

She sucked in her cheek, biting gently.

Nick didn't care, of course. She couldn't be with him if he did. He'd wanted to meet her dads for months. He wanted to know all about her childhood, the club, her interests and hobbies. It was only logistical concerns that had kept him away for so long.

Logistical concerns meaning his parents. His father, really. She had a feeling his mother would be more accepting of her childhood and her fathers' lifestyle.

His father, on the other hand . . . when she'd first met Mr. Chilton her impression was of someone who, in another life, might have worked at the club. She'd never told him that. Would never tell him that. She'd only confessed it to Nick late one night when they'd been huddled under the covers sharing secrets between kisses. His expression had immediately turned sour and for a moment she'd regretted saying anything. But then it shifted and he laughed and she'd known. She'd known then without any doubt that despite his parents, despite the differences in their upbringings, despite how young they both still were, he was her person.

Her fathers would understand. Especially Hannibal. He always talked about how he'd fallen for Will immediately. "Besotted from the moment I laid eyes on him," he'd say. "But I thought it was hopeless. I thought he was straight." Hannibal would laugh and Will would blush.

As a child Abigail hadn't fully understood. As a teenager she'd rolled her eyes.

As an adult about to tell her fathers she was engaged she found herself hoping that as she and Nick grew old they'd have the same relationship her fathers had: holding hands on the way to the market, sharing fond smiles over dinner, and making out on the couch when they thought she was asleep. Actually, she suspected they'd done more than just make out - and probably rather often - but they were still her parents so she didn't like to think about it.

They'd understand. They had to.

She took a deep breath and stepped off the curb, debating briefly as she crossed the street about whether to go through the front of the club or to their private entrance around the back. She decided on the front. The club would be quiet this early in the day, but it was still open for the early drinkers who wanted to see the acts rehearse. Will took care of most of the paperwork during the mornings; he probably wouldn't even be in the apartment.

As she walked beneath the letters that made up La Cage aux Folles the atmosphere changed. As expected, there were a few customers drinking lazily at the bar. One of them looked like he'd been there all night.

The bartender was cleaning a glass when she approached, but when he looked up he nodded at her and said "Hello, Abigail" in welcome.

"Hello." She felt a brief sense of embarrassment that she couldn't remember his name.

"Will's in the back," he said, gesturing toward the stage with his head. Then, in a stage whisper, "Hannibal is having a conniption. Something about his costume." He shook his head and smiled, turning his back to her as he restocked the clean glassware.

"Business as usual?" she asked, amused.

He turned back to her, his smile widening. "You said it, not me. He's your dad."

"Yes," she acknowledged, "he is." She was surprised at the warm feeling in her chest as she said it. She was excited to see him - to see both of them - again. Her smile widened as she approached the stage. Hannibal's lips were set in a characteristic pout that said he wasn't getting what he wanted.

"Intolerably rude," she heard him say. Will's response was more of a murmur and she couldn't quite make out the words, but she didn't get the impression he was trying to be soothing.

"You know this is unacceptable," Hannibal continued. "They took specific measurements, I provided exact instructions, and this is not at all what I asked for. Salmon, Will. *Salmon.* I was specific. These feathers," he ruffled them in disgust, "are *orange.*"

"You know," Will said, casually, "in Australia salmon are mostly orange in color."

Abigail laughed at the expression on Hannibal's face, drawing both of their attentions to her.

"Abigail!" they said at once, Will moving immediately to draw her into a hug. "Why didn't you call to say you were coming?"

“Sorry Dad,” she said, pulling back, her eyes tracing over the lines on his face. He had a few grey hairs at his temples that she was surprised to see. Will and Hannibal had always seemed ageless. She hugged him again more tightly and he huffed in surprise.

“It’s so good to see you,” he said, speaking into her hair before kissing the top of her head. She heard Hannibal come down from the stage and make his was over to them, high heels clicking on the floor of the club. His strong arms wrapped around the two of them and he sighed softly.

“It’s wonderful to have you home, Abigail,” he said. Then, pulling back. “Perhaps you can help me convince your father this costume is far too orange.”

Abigail laughed. “It does nothing for your skin tone,” she said, teasingly. Hannibal straightened, pulling himself up to his full height.

“You see, Will,” he said. “Our daughter shows some sense.“

“Don’t encourage him, Abigail.”

Hannibal sniffed. Will laid a hand gently on his forearm. “I’ll deal with it, babe,” Will said softly.

“I’d be happy to deal with it myself,” Hannibal responded darkly.

“No,” Will said with an air of finality. “That tailor makes the majority of our costumes and does an excellent job. We need him.” He shook his head to emphasize the point.

“This,” Hannibal gestured to his feather adorned and decidedly orange dress, “does not speak to excellence.”

“I said I’ll take care of it,” Will said. His voice was firm but gentle, and Abigail recognized it from when she was younger and he’d said no to something she wanted, despite her best attempts at begging. She had a feeling Hannibal recognized it too, because he sighed dramatically and slumped. The defeat only lasted a fraction of a second before he straightened himself up, towering over the two of them in the heels he was wearing.

“Very well,” he agreed. Smiling, Will shifted up onto his toes to place a quick kiss on Hannibal’s lips. Hannibal smiled in response, tilting his head toward Abigail and shaking it subtlety. Will turned back to look at her, reaching for her hands to squeeze them gently.

“Let’s go upstairs and get you settled,” he said. She nodded and hoisted her bag onto her shoulder, trailing behind him.

“I have some news, actually,” she said as they reached the steps in the back. “Something I wanted to talk to you about.”

Will paused to give her an appraising look. “Something you want to share with me and Hannibal together?” he asked.

Abigail swallowed. “I was hoping to talk to you first,” she said, her voice quieter than she would have liked, the doubt she’d felt outside pressing at her once again.

Will watched her for a moment without responding, and she was suddenly fifteen again, trying to tell him she was spending the night at her best friend Marissa’s house when they both knew she was planning to go to a party. He hadn’t been angry. He’d quietly asked her to tell the truth and when she wouldn’t, he said it for her. He told her she couldn’t go just as quietly.

It had taken her a long time to realize that he hadn’t said no because he didn’t trust her, or even because he thought she was too young, but because she’d lied. She swallowed harshly. It was only one night though, and she knew there were things Will did lie about.

He looked like he was about to say something but instead he shook his head and continued up the stairs. Everything seemed to slow down so that the last few steps were taken at a glacial speed, the turn of the key in the lock was interminable, the opening of the door as though it were pressing back against them with a will of its own.

As soon as they were inside Will turned to look at her before reaching out and pulling her into a hug once more. She turned her head to rest against his shoulder and he moved a hand to her head and she was reminded of another memory from her teenage years: her very first break-up. Will had always been irritatingly good at picking up on things, often sensing a change in her or Hannibal’s mood before even they were aware of it.

But there was nothing like coming home after your first boyfriend said he wanted to date someone else and having your dad pull you into a hug without you having to say a single word. She felt tears prick at her eyes and she felt all at once very young and very silly.

“Is everything ok?” Will asked, voice gentle. She nodded against his chest as he trailed a hand down her hair. “Your hair’s grown.”

She sniffed, laughing lightly. “It’s been a year, dad.”

“I know. A year in which you haven’t come to visit.” It was a reprimand, but a gentle one.

“I’m sorry,” she mumbled. And she was.

Will sighed. “We’ve missed you sweetheart, but you’re here now.” At some point he’d begun rocking them and he stopped abruptly, stepping back slightly and gripping her upper arms firmly. “Alright, let’s have it. What’s this news?”

Abigail looked at her feet, then Will’s. She was wearing sandals but he was wearing Italian loafers - undoubtedly Hannibal’s doing. Taking a deep breath she looked up to meet his eyes. All her life she’d been told they looked similar, and what she saw there when she looked was herself reflected back. Her strength and resolve.

“I”m getting married,” she said.

Chapter 2

To say that Will was not prepared to hear that his child - his only child, his daughter - was getting married was an understatement. He also wondered why Abigail had seemed so reluctant to tell him, and why she'd wanted to tell only him first, and not share the news with both her fathers at once. Hannibal had been in her life since she was six; before South Beach and before *La Cage aux Folles*.

The club had been Hannibal's idea, in fact. Will would never have opened it without him. It was a way for them to get away and to have something together as a family. Abigail had been young enough that he doubted she remembered much from their time before Hannibal, although she knew he hadn't always been in her life. But it had been long enough. There had been times that Will thought she was closer to her adoptive father than to him and he'd been simultaneously jealous and pleased about it. Letting Hannibal into their lives had felt like a gamble when they'd first started seeing each other. It was only later that he realized he'd spent far too much time agonizing about what it would do to Abigail if it didn't work out.

He saw her, then, they way she'd been when he first introduced her to Hannibal. She'd insisted on wearing a pinafore dress because she'd seen it in a picture book. It wasn't the style at the time and had been nearly impossible to find. Will had braided her hair in pigtails and when Hannibal said hello she curtsied - or tried to, anyway, stumbling a bit as she sank down toward the ground - and immediately asked "are you my new dad?"

He shook his head, clearing the vision and realizing he'd been staring at her for far too long.

"You're only 20," was all he could think to say. He watched as Abigail took a deep breath and nodded, her expression guarded but resolute.

"I know I'm young, but I *know,* Dad," she looked at him, blue eyes beseeching. "You always told me I'd know."

Will's exhale wasn't exactly a sigh. He'd told her that plenty of times after breakups during her high school years. He resisted the urge to qualify it now; it was clear from her expression that she was set on this engagement. He nodded reluctantly.

"Do we get to meet them?" he asked.

"Yes - well - that's kind of why I wanted to talk to you alone first." Her expression was solemn. Far more solemn than it should be.

"I'm not going to like what I'm about to hear, am I?" Will murmured, mostly to himself.

Tellingly, Abigail looked away. "You've heard of Senator Chilton, right?" She twined her fingers together, before meeting his eyes. "Nick is his son."

Will swallowed. *Senator Chilton*. Will had never considered himself politically minded, but that name was thrown across the news with such frequency it was impossible to miss it. The

man was waging a war against anyone not like him: white, male, heterosexual. Will ran a hand through his hair, wondering where he'd gone wrong. He thought he'd raised his daughter to accept others and embrace their differences as something to be valued.

She was looking at him with wide eyes. "Nick's not like his father, Dad. They're nothing alike." She paused again, still looking concerned. "But - uh - his parents do want to meet you. He, um, he needs their blessing."

"Well. That ought to be interesting. The son of the most conservative, bigoted senator we've had in years introducing his parents to his fiancee's two dads."

Abigail twisted her fingers together once more. "His parents don't know."

"Great. So it'll be a surprise then," Will said. It was more venomous than he intended, particularly when addressing his only child. He took a deep, calming breath. "Abigail," he started, but stopped when he saw her face. "What else?"

"He told them you were the cultural attaché to Greece. And that you're . . . still married to my mother."

"He told them what?" Will ran a hand across his face. "What on earth possessed him to think *lying* was a good idea? What happens when they show up here and discover the truth?"

"I was kind of hoping they wouldn't discover the truth," Abigail said, adding quickly, "At least not immediately. Not until after the wedding."

Will was silent for several minutes, watching his daughter. She was clearly nervous even bringing it up and he wanted to pull her into his arms and tell her it would be ok. This, however, was not ok.

"Abigail," he said, voice quiet, "It took me years - decades - to fully accept who I am. I *like* who I am. You're not ashamed of Hannibal and me, are you?"

Abigail shook her head forcefully. "No - never."

"Then why would you ask me to lie?"

She bit her lip and looked at him, blue eyes large and luminous. "Because I love him. And you love me."

Will was saved from a response by a crash from the back of the apartment and a sudden yelp. Abigail's eyes widened further. He was sure they matched his own.

"Nobody worry, I am fine!" Jimmy's voice came from the direction of the crash. Another smaller crash followed, itself followed by another yell. "Still fine!"

"He's fine," Will said, raising an eyebrow. "But is Hannibal's new sculpture?"

Abigail laughed, some of the tension between them dissipating. Will laughed too, before his smile turned back to a frown.

“We’ll talk about this more later,” he said, starting toward the back to investigate the damage. He paused, turning back around to look at Abigail. “You’re telling Hannibal.” She looked like she was about to protest, but Will shook his head. “He’ll take it better from you anyway.”

He supposed that was it. He might not have said the words but he’d agreed to the charade, for better or for worse. Hannibal would make a fuss but he would agree to whatever Abigail wanted. Will ran a hand through his hair, sighing heavily. There were still parts of himself he hide from the world. He supposed this was no different. And more temporary.

It would be fine.

Right?

He didn’t feel at all confident as he made his way to the back of the apartment. Jimmy was perched on the middle rung of a step ladder, dusting the top of Hannibal’s bookshelves. His cutoffs left little to the imagination and he swayed absently as he dusted, singing to himself.

Will had his doubts about the quality of the dusting.

He glanced around the room. Nothing appeared out of place at first glance and Will was pleased to see that Hannibal’s newest acquisition - a carving of a stag covered in feathers - was intact. He ran a hand over it absently. The detail was remarkable. It was so finely textured he could feel the individual feathers beneath his fingertips. But then it ought to be, considering what Hannibal had paid for it.

He smiled to himself. Hannibal and his indulgences. They had far more art in the apartment than they needed, but Hannibal enjoyed it and Will enjoyed Hannibal’s enjoyment.

“Jimmy,” Will said. He hadn’t meant to startle the man, but Jimmy turned suddenly on the ladder, wobbling precariously and nearly falling before jumping to the floor.

He straightened quickly, jutting his hip out, crossing his arms and looking at Will accusingly. “You scared me! When did you come in?”

Will resisted the urge to laugh. “Several minutes ago. You were -” he waved a hand vaguely at the bookcases “-preoccupied.”

“Yes.” Jimmy said with an exaggerated sigh. “Your husband. He piles books everywhere and the bookcases - they are not balanced. Things fall.” Will smiled to himself, well aware Hannibal did no such thing.

“Nothing broken, though, right?”

“Oh no,” Jimmy said, wide-eyed and sincere. “I would never allow any of his precious things to be broken.”

Will put a a hand on his shoulder. “Be careful you don’t break yourself, either, Jimmy.”

“Oh no, Will,” he said. “I don’t break.”

Will looked back at the sculpture of the stag, considering. A lot of Hannibal's art was . . . erotic. If they were going to do this thing - if he was going to pretend to be the attaché to Greece and worse, *straight*, they would have to change some of the pieces in the living room. On second thought, they were going to have to change all of them.

"Can you move this to the main room?" he asked.

Jimmy gave a confused look but nodded, moving gracefully toward the the sculpture and reaching out to grab it.

"Actually," Will said, lifting a hand. "Not now. Left me talk to Hannibal first."

"Maybe he can move it too. It's heavy. If anyone breaks it, it should be him."

Will gave him a solemn nod. Hannibal would be devastated if anything happened to that ridiculous thing - he should be the one to move it so none of them could be blamed if something did go wrong. Besides, Hannibal would prefer to arrange the living and dining areas himself. The man was nothing if not precise. Will smiled softly. He had been since the day they met, back when he used to wear three piece bespoke suits instead of sequined dresses with supposedly salmon feathering. Time had not mellowed him, it had merely redirected his energy.

Will wouldn't want him any other way.

He frowned at the thought of pretending not to be with Hannibal. But it would be - what? A night at the most? He sighed. *For Abigail*, he thought. For his only child, he would endure it.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

This chapter is a bit longer than the others and is nsfw.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal walked wearily up the steps, shoes in hand, wondering what mood Will would be in. As the star of the show he was seen as the more imperious in their union. Perhaps it was even true. He did expect a certain degree of professionalism to achieve perfection - a professionalism which he had certainly not been getting from the new boy hired for his act. The afternoon had been trying and he could feel a headache starting behind his eyes.

But Will. It was his husband who had always been swayed by emotions. He felt them too keenly - both his own and others - and Abigail had been a swirling mass of them when they'd spoken. He didn't imagine Will was pleased by her request. He, on the other hand, had always known the need to hide his truer self. He hide still, from everyone but Will and Abigail.

He felt a hot spear of jealously at the thought of Will with anyone else, real or not. He'd wanted Will from the moment he set eye on him all those years ago; the surprisingly insightful man who wore too much flannel and was always covered in dog hair. He'd been hired as a consultant for the firm's software upgrade and had immediately made an impression on Hannibal with his mop of unruly hair, rosy cheeks and perpetually chapped lips.

How he'd wanted to kiss them, to taste the softness beneath the dry skin. Will's tongue would occasionally peek between those enticing lips as he worked, and Hannibal wanted nothing more than to suck it into his own mouth. He'd tracked the movement of that elusive pink tongue as it moved across dry lips, leaving a wet sheen of spit behind that he'd wanted desperately to taste.

He could, now, and he did whenever possible. Everything about Will was something to be savored. For months after they met he'd believed the other man was out of reach. He was twitchy. Hesitant. Not at all like the Will awaiting him in their apartment, who would be self-assured regardless of his mood.

No, the Will he'd first met gave him reluctant smiles and shied away from any type of touch. He was also - or so Hannibal thought at the time - straight. Ironic, really, given their current location and profession. But Will had only ever spoken appraisingly of two people: a woman

named Margot, and another name Molly. Through an odd twist of circumstance Margot was the mother of his child - though Hannibal would only learn that much later.

Molly was the HR specialist that had brought him in to work on the project. She would gift him with soft smiles and they would talk about dogs and their children.

Hannibal had despised her then and thinking about her now he felt the same bitter anger he had all those years ago.

Will would tell him he was being foolish. *His* Will, who he had finally asked to dinner, deciding he wanted the company of this beautiful man any way he could have it. He hadn't expected Will's shudder when he passed him a wine glass and their hands touched briefly, the dilation of Will's pupils when Hannibal moved closer, or the tentative kiss he'd received after dessert. A sweet, chaste kiss that had quickly escalated to a wanton make-out session, ending with his mouth around his Will's cock for the first time, swallowing him down with relish the way he'd been imagining for months.

His imagination had been nothing compared to the reality, and the memory of their first encounter made him long to touch his husband's warm skin, to feel his soft flesh beneath his hands and teeth. He wanted to watch Will quiver with desire. Seeing his husband come apart at the mercy of his hands, mouth and cock never ceased to be pleasurable. He'd heard from many that the ardor faded over the years, but if anything Hannibal wanted Will more as the years passed. Will aged like a fine wine, constantly improving in flavor and bouquet.

Hannibal made his way up the last few steps quickly, opening the door and tossing his shoes to the side. It was uncharacteristically sloppy of him.

"Hannibal," Jimmy said as he walked through the door. "Are you ok? Would you like one of your pirin pills?"

Hannibal shook his head. "I need to talk to Will." Jimmy looked him up and down, smirking in a way that suggested he was well aware *talking* what not what Hannibal had in mind.

"He's in the kitchen."

Hannibal wasn't sure if he thanked the man or not before turning to stalk toward the kitchen where his husband was chopping vegetables. He wrapped strong arms around Will's stomach, pressing himself tightly against Will's back and feeling the heat of his husband's body.

"Hannibal," Will murmured, "I'm trying to cook dinner." Hannibal smiled into his curls. Will didn't sound upset in the slightest. Nor did he seem disinterested as he teasingly pressed back, rubbing subtly against Hannibal's growing erection. Hannibal shifted one hand lower, slotting it between the waistband of Will's slacks and his taught stomach. Will made a soft pleased sound, but dislodged the hand as he turned to face Hannibal.

"We need to talk about Abigail," he said, his lips hovering tantalizing close. Hannibal flecked his tongue out and licked across them.

“Let’s talk in the bedroom,” Hannibal said, suddenly aware Abigail was likely in her old room and wouldn’t want to walk in on her fathers fucking in the kitchen. Otherwise Hannibal had no qualms about bending Will over the counter and taking him there.

Will shuddered, eyes dilating, reminding Hannibal of the first night he’d invited Will for dinner; the night he’d been thinking about on his way up the stairs. He pulled Will after him as he headed towards the master bedroom. As soon as the door was shut behind them Hannibal pressed Will against it, pinning him and crushing their lips together. Will’s hands moved to his chest, pressing him back. Hannibal looked at him questioningly but Will said nothing, instead pushing Hannibal to indicate he should turn.

Will took hold of the zipper on the back of his dress and began unzipping, moving with a deliberately frustrating slowness. Hannibal was tempted to protest but the kisses and soft sucking that trailed after the zipper quieted his complaints. Once the zipper was undone Will reached back to his shoulders, pushing the dress off as Hannibal allowed it to fall to the ground.

He bent to remove his stockings but Will stopped him. “Leave them on,” he said, voice husky. Hannibal turned, standing before Will in thigh highs and lace panties. His lover’s chest rose and fell rapidly.

“God, Hannibal,” Will said, sinking to his knees to mouth at Hannibal’s cock though the panties. Hannibal groaned, pressing into the wet promise of Will’s lovely mouth. Will hooked his fingers through the waist band of Hannibal’s underwear, pulling them down to his ankles. He looked up, expecting Hannibal to step out, but instead Hannibal placed two fingers under Will’s chin, gently encouraging him to stand. He ran his thumb over plump red lips before reaching down to undo the button and fly on Will’s slacks. They fell to Will’s ankles, his boxers quickly following, and Will watched Hannibal as he stepped out of them.

Gripping Will’s biceps Hannibal kissed him once more. Will moaned pleasingly into Hannibal’s mouth, sending a jolt of pleasure to his already extremely interested cock. It twitched, leaking pre-cum onto Will’s thigh.

Turning him roughly, Hannibal moved him to the bed. It was a bit awkward waddling there with his underwear still around his ankles but he only spared the briefest moment of thought at the indignity of it, far more focused on the supple, heated skin beneath his hands. Will was stunning. He’d been stunning when Hannibal met him and he was stunning still, turning heads anywhere they went but never quite realizing the extent of his beauty.

When they hit the bed he pressed Will down over the mattress. Will moaned softly as he was pushed down onto the smooth duvet, spreading his legs without being prompted as Hannibal kneaded his ass and then trailed his down down the cleft before pausing, tongue circling over that sweet pucker of muscle, committing Will’s harsh breathing and soft, needy moan to memory before licking across the spread of his husband’s ass and pressing in.

The sound Will made was soft, muffled by the mattress as he pressed his face into it; no doubt conscious of the fact that their daughter was in the house. Hannibal delighted as his husband’s cock grew heavy and flushed, pressed firmly against the edge of the bed.

Teasing a finger against the spit-slicked hole, Hannibal added it next to his tongue.

“Hannibal,” Will breathed softly, arching into the touch.

“*Mon biquet.*” He ran a hand down Will’s back, already covered in a light sheen of sweat, and finally stepped out of his underwear, moving to grab the the lube from the bedside drawer. Rubbing some between his fingers he ran a teasing finger in a circle around Will’s opening, fingertip tracing the ridges of muscle. He pressed the single digit in, spreading the lube before adding a second. He stilled then, running his free hand down Will’s back once more. His lover groaned, rolling his hips once and then moving in small thrusts that gradually deepened. Hannibal inhaled sharply at the sight of Will fucking himself on Hannibal’s fingers.

“Teasing bastard,” Will gritted out, shifting his hips to change the angle when Hannibal’s fingers failed to hit that sweet spot inside. Hannibal kissed the small of Will’s back, enjoying his husband’s frustrated groan as he rested his head on the bed. “On the bed,” Will said, before pulling himself off Hannibal’s fingers and climbing onto the mattress.

Accepting it as the command it was Hannibal followed him, but not before bending to grab both the lube and his lace panties from the floor. Will was on all fours on the bed, back arched slightly, muscles coiled tight, smooth pale skin glistening with sweat and on display. Hannibal took a moment to simply enjoy the sight.

At the pop of the cap on the lube Will growled. “Enough of your fingers.”

Years ago, Hannibal might have asked if he was sure. He didn’t now, instead squeezing lube on his cock and gripping himself firmly before moving his hand in slow, pleasing strokes.

Will made a soft, irritated sound and Hannibal chuckled, low and throaty. Will didn’t need to speak to express his impatience, but then he never had. They’d been in sync since virtually the moment they’d met. Hannibal made soothing noise, caging Will’s body with his own and pressing the nylon stockings against his husband’s legs. Stroking once more down Will’s back he lined up and pressed in. He moved slowly, despite Will’s impatience and despite the way his husband’s body opened so beautifully to him.

“Fourteen years, Hannibal,” Will said. Hannibal could hear the eye-roll.

“I’m savoring you.” No matter the number of years spent together he would always be awed at the joining of their bodies; the physical expression of their bond that brought them both such pleasure.

Will pressed back, urging Hannibal on. Once fully seated Hannibal paused, grabbing the discarded underwear before reaching around his husband’s waist to wrap it around his swollen cock. Will made a choked noise as Hannibal gripped him firmly, stroking slowly. Will’s fingers curled in the duvet and Hannibal flushed with pride and heightened arousal. He began to move, thrusts slow and steady. They fell into a familiar rhythm quickly, Will gripping at the mattress and choking off moans as Hannibal thrust into him, stroking him in time to the snap of his hips.

Will made such beautiful noises when he was trying not to be loud and failing. Hannibal thrust harder, deeper, picking up speed as he felt his orgasm approaching. His skin tingled and he heard his own breathing, harsh and rasping in his ears. He stroked Will faster, firmer. Will made a sound that might have been pleasure or distress. The different sensations were likely overwhelming him but he hadn't asked Hannibal to stop. Instead, when Hannibal slowed slightly, he shifted back, lifting his arms from the bed as he rose onto his knees.

Hannibal moved with him, wrapping an arm around his chest and fucking into him with renewed vigor.

"Yes," Will hissed. Feeling the twitch of muscle under his arm Hannibal began to stroke faster, but Will wrapped a hand around his wrist, stilling him. "I'm too close." Hannibal released him, grinning into his husband's soft curls before trailing kisses down the side of his face and neck, which Will tilted to allow for better access. Hannibal moaned into his back, the scents of sweat, soap and sex mingling pleasingly on his skin.

Will moaned in response, a sound of both pleasure and encouragement, and Hannibal was spilling inside of him, gripping him tightly across the chest as he did. "*Tu esi tobulumas,*" Hannibal breathed into his husband's hair. Will allowed him a moment to collect himself before shifting to pull away. Will turned, remaining on his knees and kissing Hannibal fiercely, his erection jutting into Hannibal's thigh. Will pressed him down on the bed before reaching for the lube.

As he was about to squeeze some onto his fingers Hannibal shook his head. "I'm ready for you."

Will's eyes went impossibly dark, pupils swelling so that any hint of blue was eclipsed. "Fuck," he gasped, gripping the base of his cock and squeezing his eyes shut. "What you do to me."

A fierce surge of pride had Hannibal reaching for him, pulling him down into a harsh kiss. Will returned it eagerly, slicking himself and pressing in without their lips breaking contact, breathing hard and hot into Hannibal's mouth. Will rubbed his hands up and down the stockings on Hannibal's legs. Despite feeling loose and sensitive from his own orgasm, Hannibal wrapped his legs around Will's lean waist, pressing his calves into his husband's lower back. Will was incredibly close: Hannibal could feel his husband's cock twitching inside of him and Will had yet to move.

"Hannibal," he said softly. Taking his hand, Hannibal kissed his knuckles.

"It pleases me to see you like this," he said. "It pleases me to know *I* am the cause."

"Always," Will said roughly, thrusting into him. It wasn't long before he buried his face in Hannibal's neck, moans vibrating through Hannibal's chest as Will spilled inside him. He rested on Hannibal's chest and they lay together, Hannibal running a soothing hand down Will's back, until they felt ready to move again.

"I'm sure you want to take these off," Will said, tugging at Hannibal's stockings.

“Maybe you can wear them next time,” Hannibal said, peeling them from his legs. Will laughed. “You are well aware of how stunning you are in stockings, Will. Sometimes I don’t know why I’m the one in the show.”

“Because you’re a prima donna.” Will moved to kiss his husband. “Because you need the attention. Because you *adore* having people look at you, and I do not.” Will lifted a stocking from the bed. “But I will wear these next time if you want.”

Hannibal moved to cage him, pinning his husband to the bed once more. “If I were a younger man, Will.” Will laughed, brushing the hair from Hannibal’s face.

“Come on,” he said. “We should make dinner. We’ve probably already scandalized our daughter.”

“She’s immune at this point.” Hannibal rested his head on Will’s stomach, feeling the soft rise and fall of his husband’s breath. “Though we should talk about her . . . request.”

“Yes,” Will said. “But first, dinner.”

Chapter End Notes

mon biquet = my lamb (French)
tu esi tobulumas = you are perfection (Lithuanian)

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

> Sorry for being a bit late updating. It's been a busy week and the holiday threw me off - although it's still Thursday where I am!
>
> I put it in the summary but as a reminder this chapter has some homophobic language. It's Chilton's POV and since he is (in this fic) the conservative senator - well. His thought process is rather unenlightened, shall we say.
>
> None of it (in my mind) is particularly terrible compared to other things I've heard/read, but it is present.

Frederick was not having a good day. In fact this was quite possibly the worst day of his life. If Gideon was going to be caught with a prostitute it could have at least been a woman. Instead, he had to go and die in the arms of a man. It was against everything they stood for! Now the press were at his front door, clamoring for a statement. And what the hell was he supposed to say?

“I aligned myself with the wrong man.” “I didn’t realize the values he espoused were to hide his own deviance.” Of course he hadn’t known Gideon liked men! He would never, *never* have associated with him if he’d had known.

It wasn’t that he thought they were bad people. Of course not. He’d been friendly with people who decided they were gay. They’d all been kind, generous people.

But he didn’t understand the decision. It was - unnatural.

He paced the living room, frustrated, as Alana eyed him from the couch. “Did you even hear what our son said?” Though there was no outward sign of her irritation he could feel it roll off of her in waves. After all, one wasn’t married for more than 20 years without learning to read one’s spouse.

“What? Oh yes, of course.”

Alana’s lips formed a firm line and Nick sighed. “I’m getting married, Dad,” he said.

Frederick had started toward the windows again, hoping against reason that something had changed and the crowds outside were there to laud him for the contributions he’d made to a return to family values, not to rake him across the coals for the poor decision of a supposedly morally upstanding colleague.

As the words sank in he paused, spinning on one foot to face his wife and child. “What now?”

“Abigail. I asked her to marry me.”

Frederick snapped his fingers, trying to remember, as his wife’s lips got thinner. If she pressed them together anymore they’re disappear entirely. And wouldn’t that be a shame?

“You’re getting married.” He looked at the windows, thoughtfully, then brightened, standing straighter. “Perfect!”

He stepped over to the window and pulled the shade to the side, releasing it quickly at the flash of a camera. He didn’t notice the twin looks of surprise worn by his wife and son.

“Yes, that will be excellent,” he said “She’s the one whose father is the cultural attaché, correct?”

Nick nodded quickly.

“Perfect,” he said again, thinking out loud as he resumed his pacing. “Annabelle is a lovely girl from a good upstanding family. A wedding is just what we need to eclipse this nonsense. A union between two prominent families.”

“It’s Abigail, Dad,” Nick said. Frederick paused mid stride.

“What was that?” he asked.

“My fiancee’s name. It’s Abigail.”

Frederick waved a hand. “Yes, yes, of course it is, that’s what I said.”

“Dear,” Alana said, softly, “maybe we could focus on Nick and Abigail’s happiness. Our son is about to start a new life with someone. This is a big decision for two young people to make.”

“Of course it is! A lovely young couple, just starting out.” He clapped his hands together in excitement. “We’ll need to meet with her parents, of course, to make sure they’re ready for interviews and to give statements.”

His wife sighed, placing her hand on Nick’s shoulder. She never did like prepping for the interviews. His campaign team made sure that her natural disinclination toward being on camera was viewed as further evidence of what a dutiful, supportive wife she was. Though Frederick admitted she’d grown quite adept at handling the press when she was forced to: she always came across as perfectly poised and confident yet demure.

He’d done well, marrying her.

Moving back to the window, Frederick flicked open the shade quickly once more. The crowd hadn’t shrunk in the slightest - if anything it had grown larger. He wondered briefly if he

could sneak out the back window but discarded the idea. The last thing he wanted to do was be caught hanging from the windowsill of his own home.

“Can you arrange a dinner with her parents, Nick?” he asked. “Tomorrow if possible.”

“Tomorrow might be difficult. They live in South Beach.”

Frederick whirled on his son once more, but Nick wasn’t looking at him.

“South Beach?” he asked, before repeating it more quietly. “South Beach.”

Nick nodded. Something about it felt wrong. Why on earth would such fine people want to live *there* of all places? His campaign team would have to downplay that. Hopefully it could be avoided completely, but such things were not always possible.

“It’s only when they’re here in the States,” Nick explained. “They spend a lot of their time in Greece, of course.”

“Of course,” Frederick said. That did make more sense. If the place in South Beach was a part-time residence, maybe they hadn’t known where they’d been buying when they purchased.

“How about a few days from now? Tuesday, maybe?” Nick suggested.

Frederick looked at his son. It would certainly be more polite to give them time to prepare. But then he thought of the press contingent outside their home. Make arrangements and there was a strong possibility they would be leaked. If they were leaked the family would be followed, and the . . .

“What’s Abigail’s last name?” he asked. His wife’s eyes narrowed the slightest bit and she sighed. It was so quiet a sound someone else might not have heard it, but Frederick did and he gave her an irritated look. There’d been no reason to know the girl’s last name previously. His son had dated other women, none of them seriously. He’d seen no reason to assume this Abigail was any different.

“Graham, Dad. Her last name is Graham. Her parents are Will and Margot.”

He nodded, filing the information away now that it was necessary. It wouldn’t do to have Abigail or her parents ambushed by the press. Particularly now, when someone uninformed of the situation might say something damaging. Yes, speed was an ally in the moment. They would go tomorrow.

His eyes flicked to the window. Beside the obvious, rational reasons for leaving the following day, he wasn’t certain he could stand being a prisoner in his own house much longer. It was high time they staged an escape.

“Tomorrow,” he told his son firmly. “It’s not so far that it will be a difficult drive.”

Nick pursed his lips in a manner shockingly like his mother’s, clearly not swayed by the explanation. He seemed about to argue the point, but to Frederick’s pleased surprise he did

not. Instead, he nodded obediently. “I’ll go call Abigail.”

Alana watched him go and then turned to look at Frederick, her displeasure obvious.

Frederick ignored it. She would realize eventually that he was making the best decision possible. Alana was rarely upset with him, but even in those instances when she disagreed she always did come around.
“Frederick,” she said, softly, “Maybe you could have a conversation with your son about his decision that isn’t directly related to how it impacts your campaign.”

He looked at her, taking in her stiff posture, thin lips and still narrowed eyes. “We had a man to man talk about these things years ago, dear.”

Alana cocked her head at him, an uncharacteristic flash of anger in her eyes. “That’s not what I’m talking about. He’s barely twenty. You, especially, know next to nothing about this girl. Don’t you think you should ask him if he’s truly ready to get married?”

“You were only twenty when we married,” he pointed out. “Our Nicholas is a wise young man.”

Alana swallowed and looked down at her lap. “Yes, those are both true,” she conceded.
Frederick smiled, standing straighter. Yes, even when Alana disagreed she always came around eventually. Truly, she was a gem of a wife.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will had spent the evening before in a state of panic. It had carried through a night of fitful sleep - despite Hannibal's best efforts at getting him to relax - and into the morning. So when Margot's receptionist placed a cup of coffee in his hand and told him she'd be a few minutes late he stared at first her and then the hot liquid as though he'd been gifted with an immense treasure.

It was heavenly coffee - but then, Margot always did have good taste.

He wasn't sure how she'd feel about seeing him now. It had been twelve years since they'd seen each other in person, but even before that they hadn't seen each other much. In truth, he was nervous. Another item to add to the ever-growing list of items that were causing him undue stress. He wanted a hot bath. And a back rub.

He wanted to be in bed with Hannibal. He allowed his head to roll back on the couch, smiling up at the ceiling, as he thought of curling himself around his husband's body: their legs would be tangled together, his head resting on Hannibal's shoulder and Hannibal's hand carding through his hair. Maybe they'd be under the covers, but more likely they would have kicked them to the bottom of the bed. They tended to create their own heat.

He heard the door click, followed by a familiar throaty chuckle. "I'd say I'm flattered but I know that dreamy expression on your face has nothing to do with me."

Will lifted his head and smiled. "Hello Margot."

"Will." She seated herself next to him on the couch, her smile broad and her green eyes shining. She lifted a mug Will hadn't realized she was holding to her lips, taking a quick sip before setting it on the coffee table. She looked genuinely happy to see him.

"It's like you have a whole living room in here," Will said. "Do you sleep on this couch?"

"Is that your way of asking if I'm still married to my job?" Margot raised an eyebrow, but didn't wait for an answer before continuing. "I have. I don't recommend it."

Will pressed his hand against it, focused intently on watching the dark green fabric move beneath his fingers. The fabric was soft but heavy. He made a considering noise as he imagined sleeping on it. It likely started out comfortable but would get hot too quickly. It was not a couch intended for sleeping. Which meant she must go home more often than not. He wondered if she was seeing anyone.

"You look good, Will," Margot said quietly. Then, louder but with more warmth, "Well. You look like you could use some sleep, but otherwise you look good."

Will laughed. “Believe it or not, that’s not my normal look anymore.”

Margot’s smile was warm and held a hint of relief. “I assume you’re here about Abigail?”

Will shook his head in fond amusement. There was only so much small talk Margot could handle before she got straight to the point. His smile faded quickly as he looked at her, holding her eyes. She looked back at him earnestly. She’d hardly aged. He could see the gray in his own hair, the lines around his eyes and on his forehead. Whenever he commented on it Hannibal would trace the lines of his forehead with an odd, ridiculous sort of reverence and say he was honored to have been with Will long enough to see them form.

Margot’s skin was a smooth as the day he’d met her, her hair still a lovely chestnut brown. Abigail had his eyes but her hair was more similar to Margot’s, he thought. He hoped Abigail aged as gracefully as her biological mother. He tried to imagine his daughter at Margot’s age, but he could only see her as a child - the child he was here to ask Margot to lie for.

The child he was losing, a small, unwelcome part of his brain told him, but he brushed that thought aside. Children grow up and find their own lives and their own relationships. They make mistakes, and they learn.

Some of those mistakes are made when they’re no longer children and are life-changing in all the best ways.

He wondered if Abigail and Nick wanted to have children. He hadn’t really thought about it before and he was surprised to find that, despite his concerns, the idea of it warmed him. Abigail would be a good mother, if that was something she wanted.

“I see getting lost in your own head hasn’t changed in a decade.”

“Abigail’s getting married,” he said without preamble.

“But that’s wonderful!” Margot said, clapping her hands in delight. Will didn’t think he’d ever seen her do that before. “And here I thought you were going to tell me she was pregnant or had been kicked out of school or was addicted to hard drugs.”

“I - no, nothing like that.” Will frowned, causing Margot to reach between them and place a hand on his shoulder, squeezing lightly.

“I’m kidding, Will. You’re a good dad. Although you did sound rather concerned on the phone, especially when you insisted on seeing me in person.”

Will shrugged. Good dads still ended up with children dealing with any or all of those things. “She’s marrying Senator Chilton’s kid.”

Margot said nothing but her surprise was still audible in the sudden intake of her breath. She gave Will a guarded look. He ran a hand over his face and explained the situation as best he could.

“It’s tonight?” Margot asked. Will nodded. “And you’re ok with this? Or, more importantly, is *Hannibal* ok with this?”

“Hannibal will do anything for Abigail.”

Margot laughed. “Hannibal will do anything for you,” she corrected, gently. “Abigail is an extension of you.”

Will considered arguing. In point of fact there were things Hannibal would do for Abigail that he wouldn’t do for anyone else - and Will was fairly certain that ‘anyone else’ did actually include him - but at the same time he couldn’t completely deny Margot’s comment.

“The question is, will you?” he asked.

“Will,” Margot began, and Will was certain she was going to say no, that she was busy, or that she didn’t agree with it and that maybe Will shouldn’t agree with it. He steeled himself for her response. She was quiet for several moments, her green eyes sharp, watching him closely. “You’re the only man I’ve ever been with, you know. Being with you was a lark, and Abigail was unexpected. But I wouldn’t call it a mistake. Our connection was real.”

“I know it was. It is.”

“Sometimes I wonder,” she said before pausing and shaking her head.

“You would have been a good mother,” Will said, quietly, “If that had been what you wanted.” He reached for her. The impulse surprised him, but Margot moved willingly into his embrace and he folded his arms around her, speaking into her hair. “Thank you for giving her to me.”

They were the same words he’d spoken to her when he took an infant Abigail home all those years ago, happily committing to being a single parent for the foreseeable future. And then Hannibal had come into his life and suddenly he had a fuller life than he’d ever imagined he could.

After a few more moments she pulled back. “So, tonight then.”

“You’ll do it? For Abigail?”

“Of course I will.” At his surprised look she smiled. “You took responsibility for Abigail and allowed me to have my life. I can be her mother for a night. I’m happy to do this for her. For you both.”

“Thank you.”

“Well, there’s also what you and Hannibal did for me with Mason,” she said with a wink. “I owe you.”

“You’re welcome, of course.” Will laughed darkly and Margot’s eyes sparkled. “But you know we would have done that anyway.”

Chapter End Notes

This fic is (basically) written, but I am doing some editing as I go along and I ended up dividing this chapter. I'm not sure if that will change the final chapter count or not, but I realized I'd spent some nice moments with Will and Margot and in the end it made sense to let them have their time and pause rather than run immediately into the next part.

Either way, closer and close to the dinner!

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Once he and Margot had arranged the details, Will made the drive back to South Beach. He felt relieved, but also more exhausted than he had in years. He took a deep breath before he opened the door to their apartment, bracing himself for what was going on inside. Hannibal might have agreed to change the art and look of the apartment but Will doubted his husband was having an easy time handling the reality of what that meant.

Confirmation came as soon as he opened the door.

“Will,” Hannibal said. His voice was as smooth as ever, but was pitched nearly imperceptibly higher. Will flinched. Anyone who didn’t know Hannibal wouldn’t be able to tell.

But he could. And he knew Abigail could.

He looked around for Abigail but she didn’t appear to be there.

“Our daughter is walking the dog,” Hannibal sniffed, answering Will’s unspoken question. “As Buster can no longer handle long walks, I expect she’ll be home shortly.” He turned on his heel and waltzed into the dining room.

It was odd to see Hannibal in a three piece suit again. He still had dozens of them hanging in their closet, but he hadn’t worn them regularly since before they’d opened the club.

It still fit him like a glove, clinging to him in ways that made Will want to peel it off of him. Surely Hannibal couldn’t stay irritated with his pants around his ankles and Will kneeling in front of him.

Hannibal swung his arms dramatically, gesturing at the dining room. “As you can see, this situation has robbed us of anything that was aesthetically pleasing.” He crossed him arms and glared at Will. “Any and all culture that previously existed in this room is gone.”

Will sighed, the image of Hannibal naked - or at least naked from the waist down - in front of him rapidly fading. He ran a hand through his hair, stopping abruptly with his elbow raised above his head as he noticed a new item over the buffet. “Is that a crucifix?”

“Yes,” Hannibal said acidly as Will’s arm dropped to his side.

“There are five more along the wall,” Jimmy piped up from the corner where he’d been ‘dusting’ and pretending not to listen.

“Why?” Will asked, genuinely confused.

Hannibal’s glare intensified. “In lieu of the exceptional art that used to line our walls, we now have sham religious memorabilia to honor the highly conservative values of the prick that

will soon grace our home."

In the corner, Jimmy rolled his eyes. Against his better judgement, Will snickered.

Hannibal's eyes darkened. "William Lecter-Graham."

But Will only laughed harder at that, leaving Hannibal to stare at him with murderous intent instead of finishing whatever it was he was going to say.

"I love you, you know," Will said, trying to control his laughter as he moved closer. "But I don't think I've ever heard you say the word 'prick' before. I never thought I'd see the day."

Hannibal softened, giving in as Will moved closer still, angling for a kiss. Hannibal pulled him close so that they were flush together and Will sighed into his mouth, before moving away as they heard the door open and nails clacking along the hardwood floor.

Abigail ushered Buster into her room before heading into the dining room to join them. She looked around. "Uh, it looks good, right?"

Jimmy nodded. "Yes, yes, it looks wonderful. Lots of bare walls and Jesuses being nailed with crosses." Will bit his lip. Abigail's eyes widened slightly. Hannibal, on the other hand, looked vindicated.

"I refuse to compromise on this one," Hannibal said, looking at the enormous depiction of Leda and the Swan that sat over their table. It left very little to the imagination. Leda was completely naked and the wings of the swan were spread over her thighs as its beak pressed up into the space between her legs. Her head was thrown back in ecstasy and her hands were grabbing at the dirt beneath them.

Abigail looked at him skeptically. "No way Dad. You can practically see the swan thrusting."

"I refuse to eat in a room that is devoid of anything of artistic value," Hannibal argued. "Food nourishes the body, but art nourishes the soul."

Abigail gave him a look that was a mix of amusement and exasperation.

"It's a Greek myth," Will said, shrugging. "I'm supposed to be the cultural attaché to Greece. It seems fitting to have it."

Hannibal wrapped an arm around his waist, kissing his temple and whispering "thank you." Will leaned against him, resting his head against Hannibal's shoulder as though it were the most natural thing in the world - because it was. He saw the thought in Abigail's eyes before he thought it himself.

"Abby," Will said, quietly.

"This isn't going to work," she said. "Hannibal - you can't be here. I'm sorry."

Hannibal frowned, looking hurt in a way Will hadn't seen in years. "I think you'll find my accent allows for a number eccentricities, which is precisely why I've never attempted to lose

it."

"Plus it's hot," Will muttered under his breath. Hannibal raised an eyebrow, looking decidedly pleased, but continued speaking without comment.

"And while you may have been young, before we opened this club this was my normal attire."

Abigail shook her head. "It's not the suit. You look good in the suit. But no matter what you're wearing Dad looks at you like he wants to eat you and you are constantly staring at his ass."

Hannibal drew himself up, readying himself to say something, but before he could Jimmy jumped in. "She's right," he said. "You two are too horny. Always touching and kissing and biting."

Will cleared his throat, heat burning in his cheeks. "I'm sure we can control ourselves for one night," he said, at the same time Hannibal said "Your father has a shapely backside. Anyone in their right mind would look."

"You're not helping," Will said, leaning toward his husband. Hannibal caught him in a kiss, groping the backside he'd so recently admired and growling softly.

"I merely speak the truth."

"Yeah," Abigail said. It was amazing how much information young people could convey with that word. "The Chiltons will take one look at the two of you together and assume my dad's having an affair with my uncle."

Hannibal drew this thumb over Will's cheekbone, smiling gently. "You look quite fetching when you blush, you know."

"You see?" Jimmy said, swishing his duster through the air, releasing whatever was on it back into the room. "Too horny. Too obvious." Will laughed gently. Hannibal's thumb continued to trace back and forth across his cheekbone, the feeling of it soothing.

"You're one to talk, Jimmy, honestly." Will turned, looking the man up and down. "Look at what you're wearing? You're going to have to get a uniform, you know."

"I'll borrow one from downstairs. We have maid uniforms." Jimmy's eyes sparkled and Abigail made a strangled noise.

"Can't we just hire a straight maid for tonight?" she asked, eyeing Jimmy.

"Who said I'm not straight?" Jimmy asked with exaggerated offense. Three sets of eyes turned to look at him, mouths gaping slightly open. Jimmy shrugged. "Ok, I'm not straight. But you shouldn't presume. Besides," he smiled widely, "this is South Beach."

Will chuckled. "He's right, sweetheart. There are no straight maids in South Beach."

Abigail tossed her hands. “Fine, but at least get a butler’s uniform or a suit or something. And wear shoes!”

Jimmy looked down at his bare feet. “I never wear shoes,” he said, confused. “They make me fall down.”

Will bit his cheek as Abigail shot him a concerned look. He had no idea how they were going to make it through the night and he supposed he should have been concerned about that, but he couldn’t find it in him to do anything more than laugh in that moment. The entire idea of it was absurd.

“Perhaps you should reconsider your lie, *dukrytė*,” Hannibal said, surprisingly gently, “and allow your future in-laws to see you as you are. To be fully seen and accepted is a truly beautiful thing.”

Abigail shook her head, chewing on her lower lip. Will wondered what she was thinking. She was harder to read as an adult, particularly one that he hadn’t seen in a year - but it was clear that she was uncomfortable, and Will didn’t think it was only concern about pulling off the charade.

“Besides,” Hannibal added, almost as an afterthought, “if they don’t appreciate you for who you are there are other ways to address that.”

Will smiled darkly and licked his lips, giving a barely there shake of his head in response to Hannibal’s inquisitive chin tilt. Hannibal sighed, almost inaudibly, and stepped away from Will. There was only the slightest but of distance between them, but it felt suddenly cavernous and he realized Abigail was right. There was no way Hannibal could be in a room and Will wouldn’t gravitate toward him. It would be obvious in a heartbeat that he and Margot were not together. His husband seemed to catch his thoughts.

“Well, as I’m not wanted here,” Hannibal huffed. He turned and headed down the hallway toward their bedroom. “But I’m not cooking for a dinner to which I am not invited.” He called petulantly over his shoulder. He moved with less arrogance than Will expected - which only demonstrated how hurt he truly was.

“Hannibal,” Will said softly, starting after him. He was stopped when Abigail grabbed his forearm.

“Did Margot say she would come?” Will stared at his daughter, feeling a rush of conflicting emotions. He wanted to go after Hannibal. He wanted to comfort Abigail. He was shockingly angry with Abigail. He was incredibly, doggedly tired. He wasn’t sure he cared about any of it anymore.

He was, at this point, utterly committed to whatever was going to happen that evening.

“You know that man raised you, Abigail,” he said, not bothering to mask his frustration. “You’ve called him Dad since you were six. He made you ice cream when you were sad, he bought you clothes, he nursed you when you were sick.”

“I know,” Abigail said quietly. Will stared at her. He loved her. He wasn’t sure he had ever been more upset with her.

“Yes, Margot said she would come,” he bit out. “Although you should probably call her ‘Mom’, since you’ll need to pretend *she* did all those things.” Despite the truth of the words he regretted them almost immediately. He sighed, an apology perched on the tip of his tongue, but he couldn’t quite bring himself to speak it. Abigail seemed to understand anyway.

“I’ll make it up to him,” she said. Will wasn’t sure how she expected to do that, but it was clear that she was utterly sincere about it. And she did have a way with Hannibal.

Will stared down the hallway, sighing softly. “I’m going to go comfort my drama queen of a husband.”

“Can you get him to cook dinner?” Abigail asked.

“Honestly, Abby, I don’t know.”

“Just appeal to his sense of pride,” she said nervously.

Will laughed, but it wasn’t a happy sound. He turned to Jimmy. “Figure out a back-up plan for dinner. And find something to wear from downstairs. Something that makes you look straight.”

“Nothing will make me look straight, Will,” Jimmy said seriously.

Will threw up his hands. “Just - figure it out, ok?”

He stalked down the hallway, fully expecting Hannibal to have locked himself inside the bedroom. Shockingly, he hadn’t. The last thing he heard as he closed the door behind him - loudly, but not quite a slam - was Abigail saying to Jimmy, “You do know how to cook, don’t you?”

Chapter End Notes

According to Quora, *dukrytė* means daughter, "but in a cute way". :)

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Freddie made her way through the throng of media representatives to the edge of the property. It was lined with a rather intimidating fence. It was ornamental, of course - or so they would say. But she suspected the spikes were every bit as sharp as they looked. Her colleagues - if you could call them that - had gathered in front of the house the evening before, hoping for an image or a soundbite. Aside from a few flicks of the curtains, they'd been disappointed.

Not Freddie. She'd moved around the house, considering entrances, exits and how someone might make a swift, relatively unseen getaway.

She hadn't decided exactly what to do with the knowledge she'd compiled. At least, not yet. There were a few ways she could use it. If she timed it properly, she could manage a candid shot and a speedy escape before they'd managed to summon anyone.

It wouldn't be embraced by her peers, but then Freddie hadn't made her reputation by being where everyone else was or doing what everyone else did.

She edged slowly away from the crowd, making her way slowly, unseen, to the back of the house where she paused.

There was a car parked behind the house the hadn't been there the night before. A handsome man with dark skin and dark eyes leaned against it. There was an intensity about him that Freddie recognized: violence, barely contained. His fingers twitched against the side of the car and she wondered if he'd recently given up smoking. But no - as she watched him longer his fingers weren't itching for a cigarette. It was almost as though he was playing an instrument of some sort.

She approached him, cautious.

"Something I can help you with?"

Freddie gave him her best smile. "You can tell me where you're going." He smiled in return. It wasn't friendly.

"And why would I do that?" She reached into her pocket, pulling out a $50 bill and holding it between her pointer and middle fingers. He smirked. "Really?"

"There's more." His expression was disbelieving. She held up her camera. "If you tell me where they're going and I get photographs ten percent of anything I make on the sale is yours."

“Twenty,” he countered. She didn’t need to think before answering but she paused anyway, as though she were considering for a moment.

“Deal.” She held out the money and he snatched it quickly.

“They’re going to South Beach. I don’t know exactly where so don’t ask. Leaving in the next hour.” He smiled again and she was struck by how predatory it seemed. “I hope you have a car, you’ll have to follow.”

She nodded, turning from him and heading back through the crowd. They were still gathered resolutely in front of the property, waiting. She smirked as she made her way to her car. Waiting had never been Freddie’s style - not unless it was done with a specific purpose, and even then she felt impatient with it. She strongly preferred to take the active role and make things happen.

Unfortunately waiting was sometimes part of the job, and all she could do was be prepared for the moment the thing she was waiting on occurred. Thankfully she didn’t have to wait long: there was a sudden flurry of activity at the back of the property as the Chilton’s car pulled away. A few reporters chased the car, futilely. Others ran toward their own cars or vans.

Freddie simply shifted into gear and pulled away, eyes trained on the black Lexus the Chiltons probably thought passed for “nondescript” as it headed toward South Beach, Miami.

The trip was uneventful. The driver made a “surprise” exit in an attempt to throw off anyone following them, but Freddie had been prepared for it and took the same exit without incident.

But she would be lying if she said she wasn’t surprised at where the driver took them after leaving the highway. After taking several turns that lead them further and further into areas that she would not expect a family like the Chiltons to visit - although really South Beach at all was a bit of surprise - and by the time the driver stopped in front of a club name La Cage Aux Folles she was nearly giddy with anticipation. She continued past the stopped vehicle and around the corner, cursing immediately.

It was early enough in the evening that she hadn’t even considered it might be difficult to find parking, but the sides of the street where full. When she finally did, making her way back to club as quickly as possible, the Chiltons had disappeared. She considered herself lucky, though, as she watched the Lexus drive by. It was clearly empty except for the driver. He’d let them out in front of that club and they had stayed. She would have to find them, but they were somewhere nearby and regardless of where they were, it was doubtless not somewhere Senator Chilton would want to be seen.

Whatever was happening here was going to be an amazing story.

*

Frederick exited the car, followed by his wife and son. He looked at the driver again. “You’re sure you brought us to the right place?”

“Yes sir, this is the address you gave me.”

Frederick was about to suggest - well, he wasn’t entirely certain what. He was already standing on the curb in front of a drag club, but certainly there were plenty of innocent explanations for that. Before he could say anything his son spoke up behind him.

“They’re in the apartment upstairs. The club moved in after they did. They didn’t know.” Nicholas dropped his voice and added quietly, “I’m sorry Dad. I didn’t want to tell you before we got here.”

“Well I suppose we’d better go up,” Alana said calmly.

“Go up?” Frederick asked, incredulous. She was not seriously suggesting they stay, was she?

“They are Nick’s future in-laws, dear. And you wouldn’t want to be caught in the street now, would you? Heaven forbid anyone believe you frequent a place like this one.” She took his arm gently and gave him a small smile. Was she making a joke? Before he could question her, she turned to their son and gestured for him to go in front. “Lead the way, Nick.”

Frederick studied her for a brief moment before he allowed her to pull him with her. She looked as beautiful, calm and collected as always. There was no hint of mirth or teasing on her face, but for the briefest moment he could have sworn she’d been amused.

Chapter End Notes

A brief interlude with Freddie before we get to the inevitable dinner!

Part of me wants to apologize but truthfully I think the way I ended up breaking these chapters versus the way I originally had them makes more sense. I took out the chapter count because I'm undecided about how I'll split the end and whether it will be 9 or 10 total.

As an FYI I will be traveling the next two weeks. I don't believe that will impact my posting schedule but if anything I will be trying to post early (which I doubt anyone will complain about).

Thanks to everyone who continues to read this!

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

> oops sorry. The realities of traveling caught up with me a bit and I meant to hit post on this last night, but obviously it is now Friday. This chapter is a bit longer than the previous ones, though, so hopefully that makes up for it. :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Abigail looked up when she heard Jimmy enter the apartment. Nick had called to warn they were on their way and that had thrown everything into overdrive. Well, it had thrown her and Jimmy into overdrive. Hannibal refused to come out of their room and Will had been in there talking to him *forever*.

She'd thought about pressing her ear up to the door to see if she could catch anything but she'd stopped when she considered they might not actually be talking. And she'd really rather not hear that.

And also Will was really, really angry with her. No matter what she'd done growing up she'd never felt that kind of anger from her Dad. He'd been upset or disappointed - but this was a more adult anger. Peer to peer.

She didn't like it.

She adjusted the stag sculpture on the buffet, wondering again if she was making the right choice. It was so important to Nick that his parents like her and consider them a good match. But she wasn't marrying his parents. And *her* parents were right. The truth would have to come out sometime.

Jimmy walked into the dining room while she was lost in thought. He was wearing a tuxedo that fit him surprisingly well, although he hadn't put on a tie and he left the top buttons undone. A soft laugh escaped her: he'd been right. He did not look straight. He still swayed when he walked and the exposed bit of chest made him look like he belonged downstairs - but at least he wasn't wearing cutoff shorts and a tank top. He looked pretty good, actually. All things considered.

She glanced down at his feet. "Jimmy."

His hands came immediately to his hips. "I told you I don't like shoes."

"You need to wear shoes."

"You think only of yourself." His eyes narrowed. "I don't think you deserve the shoes."

Abigail was silent, unsure how to respond.

“Wear the shoes, Jimmy.” Will spoke from behind him in the hallway. He sounded tired and unhappy and something twisted in Abigail’s gut.

Jimmy shrugged. “Ok. But you’ll be sorry you asked.”

Will sighed, looking at Abigail. The dining room was sunken but he remained at the top of the stairs, making no move to close the distance between them. His eyes weren’t cold the way they had been when he first went after Hannibal, but they weren’t warm either.

“They’re on their way,” Abigail said. “Is Dad —“ She stopped at the look on Will’s face.

He dropped his head and she sensed rather than heard his sigh. “Margot will be here by seven. I need to go downstairs and check on things before all of this gets going.”

Days or maybe only seconds later - Abigail wasn’t really sure, time felt like it was both flying and going by so slowly she could scream - she was emerging from the shower when she thought she heard Will’s ringtone. She changed quickly and peeked her head out into the hall. “Dad?”

Will emerged from the living room. He caught sight of her peering down the hallway and his expression turned concerned. “What’s wrong?”

Somehow that brought more of a twist to her stomach than his anger from earlier in the day. She shook her head. “I thought I heard your phone, but I must have been hearing things.”

Will patted his pocket. “I don’t have it. I must have left it in our bedroom.” Shrugging, he added, “I’ll check it later. They should be here any minute, right?”

Abigail nodded, swallowing harshly. Will knew she was nervous but he said nothing and made no move to comfort her. Still angry then, even if that anger was dying.

“And Mar - Mom?”

She shrugged and look at his watch. “She must be running a few minutes late.”

Before she could consider it further there was a knock at the door and Will was opening it in greeting. “Hello,” she heard him say as she moved down the hallway, eyes trained on the floor. “I’m Will, Abigail’s father. Please, come in.”

She glanced up. Nick was looking at her curiously, but his parents were both focused on Will. He looked poised and confident, flashing them a smile that was more at home on Hannibal’s face. She felt a pang of regret. Usually Hannibal was the one ushering everyone in, clutching their hands in firm handshakes, introducing them to his ‘darling husband Will’ and offering them drinks.

This was wrong.

But she said nothing, watching as Senator Chilton introduced himself as well as his wife and son. Will took each of their hands in turn before ushering them into the living room. Jimmy lingered in the corner, ready to pour drinks if requested but looking like he'd prefer not to move. The Chiltons seated themselves on the couch while Abigail took the loveseat. They stared at each other awkwardly, unsure where or how to start the conversation.

"And where is your wife?" Senator Chilton asked. Although his tone was polite there was an undercurrent of irritation to it. Abigail looked at Will out of the corner of her eye and caught his eye-roll. She glanced at her lap briefly, unable to completely keep from smiling.

"She's running a few minutes late from her appointment," Will said smoothly. As if he'd summoned her the door of the apartment opened and a harried voice called "I'm here!"

Abigail's eyes widened. The voice was pitched higher than she'd ever heard it but there was no mistaking it. That same voice had sung her lullabies when she was young, soothed away her nightmares, casually lectured on the proper way to slaughter a pig and, most recently, complained ardently that the color of his gown was orange and not salmon. Shit. She looked at Will. What on earth was he doing? There was no way Hannibal was going to pull this off.

But there was no denying the way Will's eyes lit up when he - *she?* - appeared in living room. Hannibal was wearing a dress that was frumpier than anything Abigail had ever seen him in, a wig of shoulder length brown hair, and way more makeup than normal. His chest was padded. He looked almost matronly - but he still looked like a man. Nick was staring at her from the couch, the expression on his face slightly terrified. She gave the barest shake of her head.

"I'm so dreadfully sorry," Hannibal said, making his way into the space. "You must be the Chiltons." He extended his hand, almost tentative, to shake Senator Chilton's hand first. Abigail held her breath, expecting the Senator to react with anger, to insist that they all leave and Nick never see Abigail again, to toss his wine in Hannibal's face . . . but instead he took the hand offered and instead of shaking it brought it to his lips to kiss it briefly.

"You're a tall drink of water, aren't you?" He smiled and Abigail turned to Nick to see that his eyes had widened even further. Not only was the Senator buying it, but he was looking at Hannibal almost appreciatively. "I take it you're Mrs. Graham, and it is a pleasure to meet you."

"Lecter-Graham," Hannibal corrected, laughing softly. He waved a hand at the Senator. "Oh, I know it's more traditional to take your husband's name, but the 'Lecter' name is a distinguished one where I am from and Will was kind enough to allow me the indulgence."

"Well, I can certainly see why."

Hannibal raised a hand to his cheek and made an "oh" sound. "Flatterer," he said, waving his hand at the Senator again. Abigail sucked in a breath and nearly choked, but Hannibal just reached for Nick's mother's hand next.

"Alana," she introduced herself with a soft smile.

“A pleasure to meet you,” he responded, before moving to pat Nick on the shoulder. “And of course you’re Nick. We’re so pleased our Abigail has found love with you. You’ll take care of her now, won’t you? I won’t have to come chasing after you because you’ve hurt our darling?” His voice was teasing but Abigail could hear the edge in it. He meant every word, and she warmed at the knowledge.

Nick swallowed. “No s- ma’am. I love your daughter.”

“Good,” Hannibal nodded. “That’s good then.” He moved to give Will a quick kiss - possibly the most chaste kiss Abigail had ever witnessed between the two of them. There wasn’t even any tongue.

“*Kur Margot.*” Will didn’t phrase it as a question, although it was one. *Where’s Margot?*

“*Užstrigo už tilto. Ji paliko žinutę tavo telefone,*” Hannibal responded.

“That’s a beautiful language,” the Senator commented. “Greek?”

“I’m sorry. How terribly rude of us.” Hannibal turned, shaking his head in feigned self-recrimination. “Lithuanian. It’s where I’m from originally.” He paused, looking not at Will but at Abigail. “I was just telling my dear husband I left a message on his phone, letting him know traffic was terrible and I would be late.”

“Well, nothing to be done about that,” Senator Chilton said.

“No, I suppose not. But it was ever so upsetting.” Hannibal sighed dramatically. He was over-selling it. If there was even anything to be sold. Abigail looked wildly between Will, Hannibal and the Senator, but to her surprise Nick’s father was still looking at Hannibal with a fond expression on his face.

“Well, we’re all here now.” Mr. Chilton smiled broadly.

“Yes, and that is what’s important, isn’t it?” Hannibal smiled in return. “We are all here, together, as a family.”

Abigail swallowed and Nick squeezed her hand. Will cleared his throat and clapped his hands together. It was something he only did when he was nervous, although he was otherwise hiding it well.

“Well, Senator, Alana, Nick - you’ve traveled all this way and I’m sure you’re hungry. Let’s move into the dining room and get started on dinner, shall we?”

There were various murmurs of assent. *The sooner we eat the sooner this is over*, Abigail thought. Will turned to Jimmy, who had remained stationary in the corner. “Jimmy, I’ll get everyone seated if you’ll bring out the food?”

“Of course sir.” Jimmy’s voice was lower than normal and he enunciated carefully, like he was doing his best impression of a butler he’d seen on TV. He moved slowly from the back of the room, taking a few cautious steps before he began walking normally -

- and promptly fell flat on his face. There was a collective inhale but before anyone could comment Jimmy popped back up.

“Shoes!” He yelled irritably, gesturing wildly at his feet and continuing toward the kitchen, stumbling a few times but managing not to fall.

“Why is he wearing shoes?” Hannibal looked at Will with a confused expression on his face while the rest of the group stared after Jimmy, dumbfounded.

“Is he wearing them on the right feet?” Alana asked gently.

Will said nothing, instead ushering them into the dining room. Hannibal had always been particular about seating arrangements and Abigail was surprised when he immediately agreed to Senator Chilton’s request that they be seated next to each other. But then he hadn’t planned the dinner - she felt a now all-too-familiar pang of guilt - so maybe it didn’t matter to him.

Or maybe he was enjoying himself way too much. The look on his face, although polite, was incredibly pleased and the smallest twitch at the corners of his mouth told Abigail he was loving every minute of this.

She groaned inwardly. Of course Hannibal would love fooling Nick’s parents. He’d always loved putting on a show. He and the Senator were chatting amicably until Mr. Chilton looked down at the bowls placed in front of them on the table.

“These are very unique dishes,” he said, lifting the bowl to inspect it more closely.

“They certainly are,” Mrs. Chilton agreed. There was a hint of amusement in her voice. “Where are they from?”

Abigail looked down at her bowl, taking in the serving pieces Jimmy had selected for the first time. It was one of their nicer dinnerware sets. Unfortunately it was also one of the more erotic ones: pair after pair of men in various sexual positions. She looked up at her Dad in horror. Will was staring back at her, looking panicked in a way she’d never seen him.

“Oh, we bought these in Greece.” Hannibal’s tone was mild, but the look he gave Will said even he was surprised. He stood, moving to the wet bar at the side of the room. “Do you prefer red wine or white wine, Senator?”

“I’ll just check on Jimmy,” Will murmured, racing out of the room. Abigail lifted the pitcher of water and began pouring for the table.

“Please, call me Frederick,” Senator Chilton said, responding to Hannibal. Alana raised an eyebrow at her husband but said nothing while Hannibal laughed softly in pleasure. “Doesn’t the wine depend on the food?”

“Oh yes,” Hannibal agreed, “but not necessarily the color. The flavors need to compliment each other, and you’ll find that can often be done with either a red or a white.” He paused, frowning slightly. “Unfortunately I did not have time to plan this dinner, and I’m unsure what

Jimmy has prepared for us. Something light, I think, which should compliment most foods." He pulled a white from the wine cooler and opened it with a practiced ease.

"You're quite good at that," the Senator commented.

"Oh, I believe you'll find that, with some notice beforehand, I am a rather adept host." He was looking toward the hallway and his voice dropped slightly in pitch. Abigail turned to see Will rushing into the room with a pot and a ladle. Hannibal's expression reflected her thoughts. *What on earth?*

"Seafood soup," Will announced, moving to stand beside Alana first. Although Hannibal had managed to distract the Senator, Alana was still looking thoughtfully at the dish in front of her, tracing the edges with a delicate finger. Will ladled soup into her bowl without any further comment, before moving quickly around the table. Hannibal poured wine for everyone - including a small amount for her and Nick. She looked at the Chiltons but Alana only smiled and the Senator was still staring at Hannibal.

Abigail nearly snorted. In different circumstances she might have sworn Nick's dad had a crush on Hannibal. Her eyes flicked quickly to Nick, who looked back at her in amusement.

Will seated himself and gestured for everyone to eat before taking a spoonful of his soup. He immediately made a face and lowered the spoon slowly back into the bowl. A moment later Abigail realized why.

The soup was terrible.

Hannibal looked appalled, but recovered quickly when the Senator started asking how he and Will met.

"Well, Frederick," Hannibal emphasized his name, and Abigail could have sworn the Senator actually blushed. She looked at Alana who looked back at her, eyes twinkling in amusement.

She knows. Like the rest of the table Alana cringed at the flavor of the soup, lowering her spoon delicately back into the bowl. Only the Senator had yet to taste it - he was too wrapped up in Hannibal to have considered eating.

"I suppose you think it's rather forward of me to have invited him to my home for dinner," Hannibal was saying, "but I have always known what I wanted, and I wanted my Will the moment I laid eyes on him." Will was flushing slightly, and Abigail was suddenly curious. She knew they'd met through work, but she'd never heard the full story. "Why that very first night we had dinner -"

"Ha- Honey," Will interrupted urgently. "Maybe we don't need to tell that story."

"Well." Hannibal grumbled. "I was *going* to say that you kissed me and it was magical, and that I'd never imagined you were interested in me and I had never been so pleased in my life."

“Really?” Senator Chilton asked, stopping whatever Will was about to say. Instead Will took Hannibal’s hand, squeezing it gently. “I can’t imagine a woman such as yourself being concerned about gaining anyone’s interest.”

Alana made a sound that Abigail could have sworn was a snort before lifting her napkin and coughing into it. “Excuse me,” she mumbled.

Hannibal waved a hand. “We all have our insecurities, Frederick dear.”

“Now tell me,” the Senator actually placed his chin in his hand when he spoke, “was your husband already the attaché to Greece when you met? Graham isn’t a Greek name.”

“Oh no dear, of course it isn’t. It’s English. Although I believe he has a bit of Irish in him. He’s got that fire, you know?”

Abigail nearly choked on her water. Will was now bright red, Alana had a hand over her mouth but was not entirely managing to hide her laughter, Nick looked concerned, Frederick looked smitten and Hannibal - well, if she’d wondered before there was no doubt now. Hannibal was definitely enjoying the entire situation way too much.

“I’m so pleased to be in a marriage that still has passion,” Hannibal continued, although whatever he planned to say next was lost to a bark from the hallway, followed by Jimmy cursing.

“Buster?” Will said, standing.

“You have a dog?” Senator Chilton asked.

“A very old one,” Abigail said, as Buster came bounding down the steps with energy he hadn’t mustered in years, followed by a still unstable Jimmy who lost his footing on the top step and slid down the rest of them leaving him spread eagle across the steps. One of his shoes had come off, but Abigail doubted he’d be upset about that.

“I’m fine,” Jimmy called to no one in particular. He sat up and pulled off his other shoe, tossing the offensive object to the side of the steps with no small amount of flair. It was all Abigail could do not to laugh.

Hannibal stood to help him up, but Buster immediately began growling at him. Jimmy waived him off anyway, pushing himself to his feet. “The dog will eat your face,” he said to Hannibal before looking to Will and Abigail. “And I am not wearing the shoes. They make me fall down.” He turned, stomping exaggeratedly up the stairs and away. Abigail had the distinct impression that Jimmy would have liked a full staircase in order to make his point, rather than four steps leading and out of the sunken room.

“He wasn’t wearing socks, was he?” Senator Chilton muttered, leaning toward his wife. Alana shook her head. Buster, meanwhile, was still growling softly at Hannibal.

“Sit,” Will commanded. Buster sat, although he didn’t look pleased.

“Buster, you silly dog.” Hannibal bent down to grab him and Abigail gasped when he stood. His wig had come loose. He didn’t seem to notice, but Will immediately rushed over.

“Can I speak with you in the kitchen?” he asked quickly. Hannibal gave him an odd look.

“Please come, Mom,” Abigail said. The word felt foreign in her mouth. She moved around the table to grip Hannibal’s arm, giving him a pleading look. He looked back at her in shock, but allowed himself to be drawn into the kitchen. Nick followed them, his height shielding some of Hannibal’s back.

“Your wig,” Will whispered.

“What can I do to help?” Nick asked. Taking the dog from Hannibal’s arms, Abigail handed Nick Buster with instructions to place him in the back room. Hannibal looked entirely put out.

“I’ve never once lost a wig during a performance,” Hannibal said.

“Now is not the time to be irritated by the poor quality of the wig,” Will said. He moved it back into position. “Don’t move too much or it’ll come off again. And stop flirting with Frederick.”

“Oh please don’t,” Nick said, re-entering the kitchen with a laugh, before he squeaked out a faint “sorry” at Will’s expression.

From the other room they could hear the muffled sound of Nick’s parents speaking. “I’d better find out what they’re talking about,” Nick said, before heading back to the dining room. Abigail and Will both nodded, while Hannibal sighed. Will kissed him gently but still came away with lipstick on his lips.

“Less make-up next time,” he teased.

“Next time?” Hannibal stood. “I won’t be caught dead in this dress ever again. I can’t believe we own it. It’s dreadful. Who’s costume idea was this?”

Will laughed, embracing him. “There’s my husband.”

“What on earth is going on here?” Senator Chilton asked as they re-entered the dining room. “Mr. Graham, your wife is a lovely woman.”

“I agree,” Will said.

“Then why won’t you let her speak? Interrupting her, ushering her out of the room - I can tell from our brief conversation that she’s quite engaging and intelligent.”

Abigail looked from Senator Chilton - who was wearing a look of righteous indignation - to Nick, who shrugged. Alana was looking at her husband in shock and Will appeared at a loss for words.

Abigail bit her cheek to keep from laughing. It was all too much. It was too ridiculous.

“Dad,” Nick started, but at that moment the front door opened and a musical voice called out.

“I’m so sorry I’m late.” A woman with chestnut hair and striking green eyes stepped into view. She was dressed with a casual elegance and something in the way she held herself - at ease with the world, certain of her position in it - reminded Abigail of Hannibal. There was no question who she was. She smiled at the room. “I’m Margot Graham. It’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance.”

The Senator’s eyes moved between Hannibal and Margot. “What?” He didn’t finish the question. In fact, everyone in the room seemed to be at a loss for words, including Margot, who must have realized in the instant after she spoke that maybe she shouldn’t have.

Abigail closed her eyes and breathed deeply. That was it. Whatever game she’d been playing at, and had roped her parents into playing, was up. Really there was only one thing to do - the thing she should have done from the beginning. It didn’t matter if Nick’s parents liked her or her family. And if Nick wouldn’t marry her without the lie then - well, maybe Hannibal was right. He usually was.

Not that she planned to tell him that.

She didn’t look at Nick before she did it. She just moved behind Hannibal, grabbed a fistful of his loose wig, and pulled.

“Mr. and Mrs. Chilton, I’d like you to meet Hannibal. My dad.”

Chapter End Notes

> Užstrigo už tilto. Ji paliko žinutę tavo telefone = Stuck behind the bridge. She left a message on your phone
>
> The Lithuanian, of course, is from Google translate so I apologize for any errors!

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Although Hannibal believed in consequences and thoroughly enjoyed meting them out, he had long ago discovered he couldn't hold a grudge when it came to his husband or his daughter. Not an effective one, anyway.

His previous irritation had vanished over the course of the evening - particularly as the hapless Frederick became more and more enamored with 'Margot'. Which was why, in addition to the twin feelings of pride and relief that Abigail had finally decided to be honest, he felt an accompanying stab of disappointment that the deception was over.

The expression of shock on the Senator's face more than made up for it.

Hannibal reached up to remove the hairnet he'd been wearing underneath the wig, allowing his own hair to fall free. It was considerably less styled than usual, but that seemed appropriate under the circumstances. He smiled glibly at Frederick who was starring back at him in confusion.

"I don't understand." Frederick's eyes skittered around the room.

Hannibal made no move to answer. Neither, he noted, did Will, Abigail, or even Nick. Margot looked as though she felt she should offer some sort of explanation but was unsure which one might be acceptable. Instead she stood tall, watching with inscrutable green eyes.

If she were anyone else her discomfort would have been obvious to the room. But she wasn't anyone else: Margot Verger was both an heiress and a shrewd businesswoman in her own right. She was a beautiful, fiercely intelligent woman and, if one were searching for genes for their offspring, Hannibal had to reluctantly admit that Margot's were not a poor choice.

The room was briefly silent before Alana spoke up. "They're two men, dear." Her lips curved into a wry smile. She looked rather lovely when she smiled, Hannibal thought. He turned toward Will but caught Margot's expression of appreciation instead. The change in her face was subtle but unmistakable, and from the light dusting of pink across Alana's cheeks Hannibal was not the only one who had noticed. He watched as Alana dropped her eyes, although she did not appear to be upset or embarrassed. If asked to place the emotion, Hannibal would have said she was pleased.

Curious.

"But." Frederick gestured abortively at Hannibal. Will frowned slightly and Hannibal was surprised to realize he felt sorry for the Senator. Will's influence, undoubtedly. There was no reason to feel sorry for someone like Senator Chilton, but Will was often empathetic beyond reason.

“They’re gay,” Alana clarified.

That wasn’t strictly accurate. Hannibal had been attracted to a variety of people over the course of his life prior to meeting Will - none to the same extent as Will, of course - and despite his marriage to a man would not describe himself as gay. The same was true for Will, but as he met his husband’s eyes a subtle shake of Will’s head told him not to pursue the nuance.

“But,” Frederick said again, although this time it was clearly a statement and not a question. He paused and by some unspoken agreement the room waited for him. “I thought Margot was your mother.”

Abigail’s voice was gentle. “Margot is the woman who gave birth to me,” she explained. “Will is my biological father. He and Hannibal raised me. Will and Hannibal are my parents.”

Margot smiled at that, moving across the room to place her hands on Abigail’s shoulders before sliding them down to her upper arms. Hannibal wondered what his daughter’s reaction would be. She hadn’t seen her birth mother in well over a decade and, although Will had always spoken highly of Margot and Abigail had never expressed any animosity toward her, the situation was an unusual one; tense even without the reunion.

“You’ve grown into a lovely young woman, Abigail,” Margot said. Her tone was complimentary but made no attempt to be motherly, nor did she make any move to embrace Abigail. Abigail smiled her thanks and Margot released her.

Watching the exchange, Frederick’s mouth opened and shut ineffectively. He looked rather like a fish caught on a hook, slowly coming to the realization that he’d been abruptly pulled from the river.

“I can’t be here,” he said, finally, turning to his wife and son. “We have to leave. Now.”

Alana gave a resigned nod. There was no telling what kept some people together, particularly when it was clear they weren’t suited for each other. And Hannibal may only have met the Chiltons that evening, but it was abundantly clear they were not meant to be together.

“I’m staying,” Nick said quietly but firmly. They stood facing each other. They’d formed lines, however unintentionally: the Lecter-Grahams on one side and the Chiltons on the other. Nick moved from his line to join Abigail on hers, taking her hand as he did. She smiled at him and he looked defiantly at his father.

Hannibal was still undecided regarding Abigail’s intended, but that she was very much in love with him was undeniable. He met his husband’s eyes. Will’s expression had softened. It was clear Will was also undecided when it came to Nick, but he intended to support his daughter regardless.

They both would.

Will moved closer, wrapping an arm around Hannibal’s waist and leaning into him. Hannibal put his arm around Will’s shoulders and watched Senator Chilton’s eyes widen. He waited for

the Senator's inevitable demand that Nick leave with them.

To his surprise it came not from Frederick but from his wife.

"You can't," she said, her voice strained. "You can't stay. I give and I give to everyone and you're the only one - " she paused, her voice thick with emotion, and swallowed before continuing. "Someone has to put me first." She didn't actually stamp her foot, but it would not have been out of place. Nick looked faintly surprised at her outburst but Frederick looked downright shocked.

"Alana," Frederick began, before Nick released Abigail's hand and stepped forward, taking his mother's hands in his own.

"You're right Mom," he said. "You're wonderful and I love you so much. And someone *should* put you first. But don't you think that person should be you?" He squeezed her hands and stepped backward, kissing Abigail gently on the cheek as he took her hand once more. Abigail actually blushed, something Hannibal had seen only a handful of times of the course of her life. She must take after Margot in that regard, as it was all too easy to make her father blush - an exceptionally lovely sight each time it occurred.

Frederick sighed, exasperated, and opened the apartment door. Almost immediately a voice rang out.

"Senator Chilton? Can you comment on -"

Whatever might have been said was lost as Frederick slammed the door, color draining from his face. "Fuck!"

Alana wiped her eyes surreptitiously, not looking at her husband.

"How did they find me?" Frederick asked no one in particular. He clearly wasn't expecting an answer, but Hannibal had recognized the voice.

"I've always found Freddie Lounds to be quite an intrepid reporter," Hannibal said. "Despite her subject matter tending toward the macabre. I wonder how you caught her attention, Frederick?" He allowed Frederick's name to roll thickly across his tongue, unsurprised at the dusting of color that rose to the Senator's face. Hannibal's lips curled in amusement. Pleased with himself, he looked at his husband whose arm had, coincidentally, tightened around his waist.

Will was not amused. Hannibal leaned in for a kiss but Will denied him, turning quickly and addressing the Senator. "You'll have to forgive my husband. He's always had a soft spot for Freddie."

Frederick exhaled another exaggerated sigh and looked at his wife. "It doesn't matter. We can't go now - we'll have to wait until she leaves." Alana said nothing, her lips set in a firm line and her eyes far away.

“We should at least retire to the sitting room,” Hannibal suggested. “I believe drinks are in order.”

Much to everyone’s surprise Jimmy was seated on the couch, nursing a glass of whiskey. “You don’t mind,” he said, gesturing to the drink. It wasn’t a question. It was the kind of rudeness Hannibal wouldn’t normally have tolerated, except that it was somehow endearing in Jimmy in a way that was similar to Will or Abigail.

His husband and daughter would have referred to as a ‘Jedi mind trick’: Jimmy’s method of convincing them - Will in particular, as he was the true whiskey aficionado - that they didn’t mind him drinking their liquor.

“No, but I could use one,” Will said. He sounded exhausted and Hannibal immediately began thinking of how lovely it would be to say goodnight to their guests and take his husband to bed. He had a variety of extremely pleasant ideas for how they could relax before falling asleep in each other’s arms.

“Me too, if you don’t mind,” Margot echoed. Jimmy nodded gamely and stood to retrieve the glasses. He was barefoot, his suit jacket was gone and the collared shirt he’d worn underneath it was untucked and completely unbuttoned. Back in his element, he moved with ease to the liquor cabinet, retrieving glasses and pouring generous amounts of whiskey for everyone but Nick and Abigail.

“I don’t really drink hard liquor,” Frederick commented, eyeing the glass speculatively.

“Tonight’s the night to start,” Jimmy responded sagely. Frederick appeared to agree if the long drink he took was anything to go by.

Alana took her glass without comment, taking a sip and noting Margot watching her. She smiled. The tip of her tongue moved to collect a drop remaining on the bow of her lip and she watched Margot track the movement. Her smile - which had begun as something shy - quickly morphed so that it at least bordered on coy. Margot raised an eyebrow before moving fluidly across the room and placing herself closer to Alana. Hannibal watched the two women for a moment before his eyes flicked back to Frederick. The Senator didn’t even appear to have noticed.

“Who knows how long we’ll have to wait?” Frederick moaned.

“Would anyone like some more soup?” Jimmy asked. His question was met with a chorus of emphatic ‘no’s, Alana shaking her head in warning at Margot.

“I imagine we’re all quite hungry,” Hannibal said. “Please allow me to make something for dinner.” The Chiltons looked at him with uncertainty. Abigail and Will looked grateful. Jimmy was either grateful or insulted; the shrug of his shoulders failed to clarify his expression.

“There’s no need,” Frederick said quickly. Will laughed quietly in response. Hannibal doubted anyone else noticed, but when they’d seated themselves Will had pressed against him and Hannibal felt the tremors of amusement that rippled through his husband’s chest.

“My husband is an excellent chef,” Will said, proudly. Hannibal kissed him lightly on the forehead, pleased when Will leaned into the touch.

“I’ll go make something,” Hannibal said before moving to kiss Will properly, tongue pressing between his husband’s inviting lips with no regard for anyone else in the room. He thought he heard a choking noise from the Senator but ignored it in favor of memorizing for the hundredth, if not thousandth, time the way Will’s eyelids fluttered when he pulled away, long dark eyelashes in sharp contrast to the pale skin beneath them. “I love you,” Hannibal said softly. The words were meant only for Will, but he didn’t care who heard them.

“*Aš tave myliu*,” Will murmured in response, pupils dilated and that blush Hannibal so loved spreading over the bridge of his nose. Hannibal kissed beneath both eyes, feeling the heat of Will’s skin under his lips.

He felt himself relax as he entered the kitchen. It had always been a space he controlled with absolute pleasure. The joy last for only a moment before he was frowning at the dishes Jimmy had left behind. The room was a disaster, particularly considering all the man had managed to produce was a singularly terrible soup.

Will should have cooked. He didn’t have the same passion for it that Hannibal did, but he was still quite good and would have made a delicious meal. Why he’d left that up to Jimmy, Hannibal would never know. He disposed of the remaining soup before scrubbing a large pot clean and filling it with water.

Spaghetti bolognese paired with side salads was a more simple dish than Hannibal would normally have made, but he was conscious of the group awaiting him in the sitting room. Rather than attempt to move anyone back into the dining room, when the food was ready he carried plates out to the waiting guests.

Someone had given the Senator a cool washcloth and he was reclining with it over his face. Jimmy was running his hand soothingly through the man’s hair, murmuring softly. Hannibal was surprised Frederick was allowing it, but whatever Jimmy was saying must be working, because Frederick looked completely relaxed for the first time that evening.

Margot and Alana were seated together in the corner of the room, deep in conversation. Abigail was resting her head on Nick’s shoulder. Will stood, sipping his whiskey slowly, deep in thought as he stared at one of the crucifixes Jimmy had affixed to the wall.

Abigail smiled, amused, as she took in Hannibal’s careful plating. Aesthetics were important, no matter how simple the meal. Hannibal served Abigail and Nick first, then Frederick and Alana, Margot and Jimmy, and finally Will and himself on his last trip.

Will reached out and plucked the crucifix from the wall, setting it on a side table before accepting his plate.

“Much better,” Hannibal murmured.

“I take you all aren’t Catholic?” Frederick asked, twirling pasta onto his fork and taking a bite. He made an involuntary noise of pleasure and looked at Hannibal with an expression

remarkably similar to the one he'd worn throughout their disastrous dinner. "This is incredible, thank you."

"We aren't religious," Will responded, more to himself than to Frederick.

"I am," Hannibal corrected, looking at Will. Abigail paused in her eating and narrowed her eyes slightly. "I found religion fourteen years ago and haven't wavered from it since."

"That's when they met," Abigail explained, rolling her eyes.

Nick grinned at her. "I converted a year ago, then."

"Sap," she said. Nick kissed her lightly on the lips and Hannibal - who, despite enjoying public displays of affection with his own husband had never been particularly pleased to see boys paying attention to his daughter - found he didn't mind. Will set his plate on the table next to the crucifix and took Hannibal's hand, squeezing lightly.

"Well. I'll be praying to get out of this situation with my reputation intact." Frederick set his plate carefully on the floor and leaned back in the chair once more, placing the washcloth back over his face.

"Perhaps you have the wrong reputation." Hannibal kept his voice light, but Will and Abigail both gave him knowing looks and Will squeezed his hand more tightly.

"Perhaps." Frederick said quietly. It wasn't the response anyone expected and the room fell silent once more. Hannibal began quietly collecting the discarded dishes.

"You know," Margot commented, "there may actually be a way for the Chiltons to leave without being noticed." Frederick sat up at that. Alana looked vaguely disappointed. The others looked at Margot curiously. She sipped her whiskey before speaking, raising an eyebrow at Will and Hannibal. "You're kidding me, right? You own a drag club. You have access to make-up and costumes. Your apartment has direct access to the club."

"Dress them up and they leave with the other guests," Jimmy nodded. He looked Frederick up and down. "You'll make a good woman. Good figure. Nice skin."

Frederick went pale and slack jawed once more, but a moment later he steeled himself and Hannibal understood how he'd managed to win elections. He looked ready to handle anything and everything.

Even if that meant dressing like a woman.

Leaving Jimmy and Will in charge of costumes, Hannibal retreated to their bedroom to change. It was a relief to be rid of the dress - a depressing thing, honestly. On the rare occasions he'd padded his chest for a costume it had never been as ample as it was presently. It was a relief to be rid of that as well. Rather than selecting any of the sequined dresses hanging in the closet, Hannibal fingered one of his suits. It wasn't the same one he'd worn earlier. This one was a deep blue. It was patterned, but the pattern was the same deep blue as

the fabric and difficult to notice from a distance. It was one of the more subtle outfits he owned.

After a few minutes of consideration he put it on. Although he wore the waistcoat and jacket he opted to forgo the tie, instead leaving the top buttons undone for a more casual look, something he would never have done when he and Will first met. South Beach was clearly having an effect on him. He smoothed down his lapels as he re-entered the sitting room, enjoying the way his husband's eyes raked over his body.

Frederick looked awkward in a white and silver sequined gown with a feathered headdress. He was wearing heels and Jimmy was coaching him as he attempted to walk while Will looked on in amusement. Alana was laughing and trying in vain to hide it, until Frederick stopped and glared at her.

She raised her hands, laughing in earnest. "Sorry dear, it's just - maybe you're starting to appreciate what women go through."

"I appreciate what women go through," Frederick said, his voice shockingly earnest.

"Of course you do." Alana laughed again, making no further attempt to hide it. She was wearing suit pants and a jacket, with a long, untucked light blue shirt underneath. Expertly applied make-up gave her the hint of a five o'clock shadow. Her hair was pinned up and she had a top hat to put over it.

Hannibal hadn't even been aware they had a top hat. He'd have to remember that for the future. Maybe he could get Will to wear it with that same blue button down. It brought out Alana's eyes but would suit his husband's better. It also wouldn't hang nearly as low on Will, leaving parts of him Hannibal loved . . . well, Hannibal loved his husband in his entirety, but there were certain parts Hannibal particularly enjoyed lavishing with attention.

Nick and Abigail hadn't changed, but neither of them had been frequently photographed. Hannibal supposed it hadn't seemed worthwhile to dress up a young couple that would easily blend into a crowd of young people exiting the clubs.

Will looked at his watch. "Ten minutes." Both the club and the apartment were sound proofed, so unless the door between them was open they couldn't hear the music. Will unlocked and opened it, the voice of the mc traveling up the stairs into the apartment when he did. He locked eyes with Hannibal. "No one's going to recognize you."

"That's the point, isn't it darling?" Hannibal asked. He reflected that he was once again in character and rather enjoying himself. Will led the way down the stairs, followed by Jimmy, Nick, Abigail and Frederick. Alana and Margot hung back for a moment. There was no reason for Margot to go out through the club, although she appeared to be deciding whether or not to accompany them downstairs anyway.

In the end, she decided not to.

"It was lovely to meet you, Mrs. Chilton," Margot said, falling back on formality. She extended her hand. Alana didn't take it. Instead, she stepped closer. Hannibal watched from

the corner of his eye. They undoubtedly knew he was watching, but he was polite enough to allow the illusion of privacy.

“Alana,” she said. “And it’s Bloom. I never legally changed my last name.” She leaned closer to Margot, her voice dropping an octave as she said, conspiratorially, “My husband doesn’t know.”

Margot kissed her then. It was nothing more than a quick peck before she pulled back. “Alana,” she said softly. Alana stood completely still and Hannibal thought he might have to retrieve her.

Only a moment later he reconsidered and thought perhaps he would simply leave, closing the door behind him and leaving the two woman alone. Well - alone with Buster, who’d been mercifully quiet after his escapade during dinner. But Alana roused herself, a wide smile on her face, and headed for the stairs.

It was a short walk, but she glanced behind her no fewer than three times.

Not that Hannibal was counting.

Downstairs the party was in full swing. It was tradition at the end of the performance for the talent to mingle with the crowd, singing and dancing their way to the door. It was simple to join the mix. Jimmy immediately disappeared; probably off to flirt with Brian, the bartender he’d been flirting with for the past two years without ever making a move. Maybe tonight would be the night. The attraction was clearly mutual.

Abigail pulled Alana into the crowd and one of the dancers took an instant liking to Nick, dragging him into the middle of the club to dance. He shot Abigail a panicked look as he was pulled away from her, but moments later he was smiling, clearly enjoying himself. Will was talking to a few of the other performers as they came off the stage before climbing onto it himself and disappearing into the back.

Frederick was still stumbling in his heels. He walked clumsily toward Hannibal, nearly tripping so that Hannibal had to catch him. The extra height from the shoes made Hannibal and the Senator nearly the same height and Frederick looked him straight in the eyes.

“How does anyone do this?”

Hannibal smirked. “Practice.” He was holding Frederick’s forearms and the man suddenly gripped Hannibal’s in turn.

“Stay with me,” Frederick pleaded. “I don’t want to be the only girl dancing alone.”

“Of course,” Hannibal responded politely. That seemed to settle the Senator, who stood slightly taller and began making his way onto the dance floor with a touch more grace. As they reached the center, a familiar strain of music came over the speakers. Hannibal laughed. *That’s* why Will had disappeared. They hadn’t ended the performance with “We Are Family” in nearly a decade. The crowd sent up a collective cheer as everyone began singing along. Even the Senator mouthed the words, shaky and uncertain as they were. Hannibal saw him to

the exit. Nick, Abigail and Alana followed soon after, both laughing happily, arms wrapped around each other as they nearly fell out the door.

They sobered for a brief moment before laughing again at the sight of the Senator, who sighed and turned to leave, trailed by his wife. Nick kissed Abigail quickly and fell into step with his mother. He turned to wave, grinning widely at Hannibal as he did. Abigail moved back into the crowd, leaving Hannibal at the door.

A moment later Hannibal felt an arm wrap around his waist and he turned, brushing a sweaty curl from Will's forehead. "They're gone."

"Thank god," Will said. He paused a moment before adding, "Nick seems ok though."

Hannibal shrugged. "I suppose."

Will leaned into him. "He grew on you too. And Abigail -"

"Is clearly very much in love," Hannibal finished. "Speaking of love, would mine care to dance with me?"

"Sap." Will's eyes sparkled and he smiled.

Hannibal leaned in close, gently pulling at the lobe of Will's ear with his teeth. "I was wondering where that word came from." Will shivered. "Is that a yes?" Hannibal prodded, hands moving to rest on his husband's hips.

"Always."

*

Frederick stopped to take off his shoes only a few feet outside the club, ignoring the laughter of his wife and son as he did. Their clear glee - in fact, their behavior in general - should have bothered him. Normally it would have, but the entire night had thrown him off balance and he was no longer sure what to think or how to feel.

Strange how the events few hours could impact a person.

Mercifully, he spotted their driver almost immediately and did not see any hint of telltale red curls in the vicinity. As they approached the driver he called out to him. "Meet me around the corner, two blocks down."

"Not for a million bucks, lady," the driver responded, not bothering to look up. Not knowing what to say Frederick continued walking, flustered, more laughter trailing at his heels.

At least he knew it was unlikely he'd been recognized.

Chapter End Notes

Well, I screwed up my posting schedule, obviously, since this is nearly a week late. I could blame the travel, but in reality it's because when I went through to edit this chapter I realized I wasn't all that happy with it and so I ended up rewriting a lot of it. I think it reads better now, so I hope you enjoyed it.

Although it probably doesn't need a translation: Aš tave myliu = I love you

I really, really wanted to use the Agador bit about his father being a Shaman and his mother being a priestess but them for some reason having moved to New Jersey in here, but in the end it didn't feel natural so I took it out for flow.

But:

"I'm religious," Jimmy said. "My father was a shaman and my mother was a high priestess in their tribe."

The room stared at him before Abigail broke the silence. "Don't your parents live in New Jersey?"

Jimmy scoffed. "They do. They're so stupid."

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The months leading up to their wedding were a blur in the best kind of way.

Nick had waited until they arrived home after dinner to put his foot down, offering to collect his belongings and move out.

“You’re still my son,” his father said. Nick wasn’t really sure what that meant, but his father said nothing more, instead heading into his bedroom to strip out of the dress he was still wearing. His mother gave him a squeeze on the arm and followed her husband. Nick retreated into his own room and called Abigail. She picked up immediately, saying his name in that way that still made his stomach drop. He heard a dog bark in the background and Abigail’s muffled voice asking Buster what on earth had gotten into him.

“I swear he usually sleeps like 23 hours out of the day,” she said. They spoke into the early hours of the morning and Nick surprised himself with the realization that he didn’t actually care what his parents thought of Abigail or her family, but that he really, really wanted her dads to like him.

It wasn’t a surprise - or not much of one, anyway - when his parents told him they were separating. As usual, his dad seemed more concerned about how it would impact his career, but Nick still thought his sadness was genuine when he sad he was sorry things hadn’t worked out.

His mom didn’t officially start dating Margot until about a month before the wedding, even though they talked all the time and “got lunch” a couple times a week.

Nick tried not to think about how strange it was that his mother was dating his soon to be … something. Woman that gave birth to his wife? Mother-in-law didn’t seem right. Abigail told him point blank that she and Margot had never had a relationship and if they were going to have one it certainly wasn’t going to be a mother/daughter one. They still didn’t have much of one, but they did grow closer as the wedding approached, talking more frequently to each other. Margot even made the invite list; Nick wasn’t sure she would have when they first started planning.

No, if anyone was the mother hen it was Hannibal. Always drawing them into conversation, making sure they’d been fed, assisting with the preparations … he’d even taken them both (separately) to tailors to have Abigail’s gown and Nick’s suit made to order. It wasn’t Nick’s first time at a tailor but it was his first time with Hannibal and when Hannibal brought him back to the apartment for dinner that night looking at bit worse for wear Will laughed heartily.

“I see you got the full experience,” Will said, kissing his husband.

The two of them kissed a lot. They also touched a lot, and when they weren't near to each other they gave each other long glances from across the room.

They talked a lot too. They talked like they never got tired of each other, on a variety of topics and in several languages; most commonly English (thank goodness) and Lithuanian. Nick was trying to learn Lithuanian - at least a few phrases here and there. Abigail spoke it but rarely, usually responding in English even though she clearly understood.

One night they were discussing seating arrangements and Nick decided to try it. "Whatever you want, *dukrytė,*" he said, focusing very hard on the pronunciation. He thought he'd done well - he'd heard Hannibal say it dozens of times - but Abigail choked on her wine and laughed until she had tears in her eyes. It was hard not to grumble. "What?"

"*Dukrytė,*" she said, and it did sound more natural and even musical when she said it, "means daughter."

"Oh."

She laughed again, hugging him tightly. "If you want to call me something in Lithuanian, call me what Hannibal always calls Will." She said it, but he wasn't sure he could repeat the word correctly. Yet. He would have to practice.

"That's not like, meant for a man?"

She raised an eyebrow at him and he was surprised at how much she looked like Margot. "Does it matter?" He shook his head and when she smiled he had the pleased if slightly unsettled feeling he'd just passed some sort of test. "It means beloved."

Beloved. He liked that.

The day of their wedding seemed to sneak up out of nowhere, but he was ready. He'd been ready since the moment they'd met. The church was an odd combination of people, but he still grinned wildly as he looked out over it. A number of Will and Hannibal's friends had dressed in drag and even those who hadn't were - well, flamboyant.

He'd expected Hannibal to be one of the attendees in drag, but to Nick's surprise, both Will and Hannibal wore suits. Will's was a flattering forest green shade, but Hannibal's was characteristically loud: a blue and red number paired with an equally loud tie that really should have clashed but that the man somehow managed to pull off.

But then, Hannibal always stood out no matter what he was wearing. Nick said as much to Will one evening. Will winked. "Hannibal *prefers* it that way, but don't make the mistake of thinking he can't be subtle."

There was something odd about Will's words. Nick thought, not for the first time, that there was something more between him and Hannibal - something Nick couldn't quite put his finger on. He'd asked Abigail once if it was a sex thing and she gave him a weird look before he muttered his apologies. He didn't want to think about his parents having sex either.

Abigail just shrugged. “They’re very … affectionate,” she said, a smile in her eyes. “I’m used to it. Or at least as used to it as I’m ever going to get.”

Nick’s side of the church was more subdued, although a few of his female relatives had shown up in bright colors. His mom and Margot sat on his side of the church - he hadn’t been sure which side they’d choose - and were the only same sex couple in the groom’s section. They raised a few eyebrows, but he’d never seen his mom look happier.

His dad was there too.

When he sent the invitation he hadn’t been sure the Senator would come. He’d distanced himself from Nick and his now ex-wife, probably hoping to salvage what he could of his career.

It didn’t work. He’d lost his bid for reelection. He’d also RSVP’d yes before that happened.

But if Nick had expected to see a broken man he was surprised once again. His dad looked lighter and younger than he had in years.

Later, Nick would catch Hannibal at the reception and ask him about it. “Sometimes losing what we believe makes us who we are frees us to be who we wish we were,” Hannibal would tell him, and the words would stick with Nick as he watched his father transition into a man who was still fairly conservative, but considerably less bigoted, with a thriving psychiatry practice.

In the moment, however, Nick met his dad’s eyes and smiled. His father smiled back and gave him, of all things, a thumbs up.

Then the music started, and there was Abigail. No one gave her away and they had no wedding party. Her dress was simple and elegant and she looked incredible. Hannibal had insisted he not see it before the ceremony, and Nick was kind of glad they’d chosen to keep that tradition.

After that fact he had a hard time remembering the ceremony. He didn’t recall saying his vows or exchanging rings with any clarity. What he did remember was how beautiful his wife looked and that when the officiant declared them married he noticed both his mother and Hannibal were crying.

Everything was incredible until halfway through the reception when Abigail pressed her face into his shoulder, groaning.

“Is everything ok?”

“Yeah,” she said, chuckling into his suit. “But I’m pretty sure my parents just fucked in the coat closet.”

Nick laughed and she pulled back, meeting his eyes and shaking her head with a smile.

“I want to be like them when we’re their age,” he said, almost wistful.

Abigail hummed pleasantly, amusement sparkling in her eyes. “You want to have sex in a coat closet at your kid’s wedding?”

“I - uh,” he could feel himself flushing before he laughed again. “They’re good together, you know? I want us to be that happy.”

“We will be,” Abigail said, squeezing his hand before leaning close to speak into his ear. “But right now I’m still thinking about the coat closet. And if you’re going to fuck at a wedding, you should definitely start with your own.”

Their guests were laughing, dancing, drinking and generally enjoying themselves. No one noticed as she pulled him slowly toward the back of the room before taking him through the exit, down a hallway, and toward the rest of his life.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks so much to everyone who read this. About halfway through I totally freaked out about whether or not I could do the idea justice **at all**. Hopefully I did, but even if I didn't I have to admit I had a lot of fun writing it.

(And my apologies again for falling off my schedule for these last few chapters, thanks for bearing with me.)

I want to specifically thank my Twitter wife @_FandomNeeds_. I'd been considering signing up but hadn't and then she did and convinced me to as we tossed around ideas. Many of those ideas made it in here in some way - or else sparked another idea that made it in.

She also cracked the whip on me when I was slacking, which we all need sometimes. ;)

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